

「3・11」<sup>いのち</sup>生命の記憶<sup>きおく</sup>  
——<sup>みらい</sup>未来へのメッセージ

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# **March 11, 2011** **More Than Survival**

**Messages to the Future**

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TOKYO



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## Publication Note

Now five years have passed since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Although that March 11 is a turning point in history, it is not fitting to call it an anniversary, nor does it represent some sort of goal.

March 11 is a “death day” for the many people who lost their lives. The day after, March 12, is a “day of exile” for the thousands who were forced from their homes by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

We feel this keenly in the stories told by people who lived through those twin disasters.

“On that day, the happy lives we had were cruelly torn apart. We have moved many times since then, and are still living the life of refugees.” There is so much we would never know without the stories told by those whose lives were affected.

If you go to the disaster zone today, you will find some towns where marks of the disaster have mostly been erased. Elsewhere, work is underway to raise entire towns

high above the water level, while other towns remain uninhabitable.

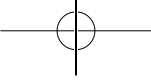
A vague sense of restored normalcy increasingly veils the scars that linger in people’s hearts.

Some of those people lost parents and children, while others lost home towns. Yet, learning what the disaster victims and refugees experienced and felt becomes increasingly difficult as time goes by.

Therefore, as part of the “SOKA Global Action” peace campaign, the Youth Division of the Tohoku Soka Gakkai launched an effort to collect accounts from people who lived through the disaster. These collected accounts are being serially published in the monthly educational periodical “*Todai*” under the title, “March 11 — More Than Survival: Messages to Our Children.”

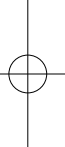
Now we have decided to publish a collection of representative testimonies from that series, including their translations into English.

In listening to accounts of those days’ events, as well as the memories of people who lived through them, members



of the Youth Division participating in volunteer recovery efforts have often expressed surprise, making statements like, “These are experiences of great significance. They give me a renewed sense of the importance of fulfilling my personal mission in contributing to recovery.”

On the other hand, those who shared memories of the disaster with us have said that, even though recovery is still underway, talking to someone about their experiences has helped them come to terms with their memories. Some have also said, “Putting these things in print can serve as a lesson to young people.”



The importance of “sharing experiences” has been highlighted in the “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,” a document that was adopted in March 2015 at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Of all the means available to keep memories from fading, the recorded recollections of those who lived through those dark days may be the most important. Such recollections also constitute powerful proof of the power of the human spirit in overcoming any difficulty.

Those of us in the Youth Division who have worked on this project believe that these testimonies are proof that the “treasure of the heart” is indestructible, even in the face of a once-in-a-millennium disaster. We also believe that making them available to future generations will help pass along the treasure of that understanding.

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to Daisanbunmei-sha, Inc. and the many people who have contributed to making this publication possible. Thank you very much.

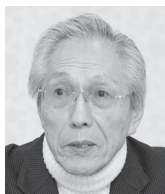
March 2016

Members of the Youth Division, Tohoku Soka Gakkai



# Moved by disaster, son makes comeback from fourteen years of social isolation

Although the Sugitas' home was swept away by the tsunami, the disaster helped motivate their son to break out of his social isolation. Saying, "I want to help people," he began doing welfare work.



**Hideo Sugita**



**Kyoko Sugita**

(Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture)

## House gone without a trace

The breakwater at the mouth of Kamaishi bay was completed in March, 2009. It was a huge structure, said to be the deepest breakwater in the world. However, the force of the tsunami generated by the 2011 earthquake was so great, it overwhelmed and destroyed the breakwater. The result was catastrophic damage to the city.

**Kyoko:** When the shaking started, I was out of the house with my husband. I have long lived by the sea, and I was raised hearing stories of the horror of tsunamis. I was always told, "If a big earthquake strikes, run away to the highest place you can find."

But I was worried about my son, Tsugio. My son had long been socially withdrawn, and I was afraid that even an earthquake of this magnitude might not get him to leave the house. I was also worried that the house might have collapsed, and he might be buried in the rubble.

What's more, our house was located just twenty meters from the water. All I could think of was saving my son before the tsunami arrived, so we hurried home, and I was astonished to find my son standing at the entrance to the house!

**Hideo:** The three of us got in the car and headed off

looking for a safe place. Along the way, I remembered that I had forgotten something, and wanted to turn back, but my son said “No!” That one word saved our lives.

**Kyoko:** I imagine many people thought Kamaishi was safe, because it had one of the greatest breakwaters in the world. A few days before the great earthquake of March 11, we had a 40-centimeter tsunami from another earthquake, and since it was no problem, I think many people had a false sense of security. That turned out to be over-confidence. When an earthquake strikes, you just have to run to the highest place you can find.

**Hideo:** The image I have of the 1960 tsunami from the Chile Earthquake is that it struck all in a rush, but during this tsunami, the water level seemed to rise in stages. One of our neighborhood friends said that the tsunami looked like a black dot at first, and that it made a crunching sound as it approached.

We lost eight of our neighborhood friends and acquaintances to the tsunami.

**Kyoko:** We spent that night in the car on a multi-function public ground, and when we tried to return to our home the next day, the road was closed. We tried walking to our house on a back street, but there was so much mud everywhere that walking was almost impossible.

We did make it as far as our neighborhood. However,

the tsunami had scoured everything away, and there was not a trace left of our house. We were at loss for words.

My family home in Otsuchi was also swept away, and the body of my brother, who was carried away with the house, was found four days later. In the end, we took refuge in my sister’s house.

**Hideo:** Because of the circumstances, some of my friends crossed the mountains from the interior to see whether we were safe. Later, they brought us rice and supplies that made all the difference. We were so grateful.

**Kyoko:** We could not allow ourselves to be defeated. I thought, there is nothing for it but for us to struggle through.

### “My spirit is unbreakable”

**Kyoko:** Before the earthquake, our son would not come out of his room even to eat. I always put his meals in a lunch box and took them to him.

Just before summer vacation during his second year of high school, he said “I don’t want to go to school any more.” He dropped out, and started withdrawing from people. He did try working in places like izakaya and box lunch vendors, but he couldn’t handle the human contact and the jobs never lasted long.

He fell into social isolation and stayed that way for fourteen years.

**Hideo:** Every year when New Year's came around, I would pray, "Let this be the year that my son breaks free." I would repeat it every year, "Let this be the year." The thing that kept me going was a little mantra, "My spirit is unbreakable." I cut those words out of a magazine and kept them with me everywhere.

**Kyoko:** I was in agony about it too, but I think it was our son who suffered most.

And it was our son who broke out of his isolation when disaster struck. When one of his old friends came from Kanagawa to help, he went with him to an employment agency, found a job, and started working. Now he has a driver's license and is working in child support for a non-profit organization.

**Hideo:** The other day, he bought a used car with money that he saved.

Even though we lost our house, I think it's great that this loss motivated him to connect with other people again. More than anything, I think it was encouragement from former friends that helped. I am truly grateful.

When Tsugio saw so many people working selflessly after the earthquake, he started thinking, "I want to be like them,

and do something to help people." That determination is what led to his current work.

**Hideo:** After living in temporary housing for four years and seven months, our application for moving into reconstruction housing was selected and we moved to our new place in April, 2015.

**Kyoko:** Although we lost many precious things, we are happy now. While we were in temporary housing, we were blessed with fine neighbors, and when we moved into our new place we were greeted warmly there too.

What I've learned from the earthquake is the importance of building relationships on a daily basis, whether with people near or far. I think those relationships are very important in times of need.

**Hideo:** Although we lost our house and all our property, the words "My spirit is unbreakable" were a source of encouragement. I take them to mean, "Even when it looks like all is lost, what matters is winning in the end."

The article I clipped is one thing I kept from the tsunami, and I still treasure it.

Reconstruction of our town is going slowly, and the fishing industry has still not recovered. The future is uncertain, and I'm sure there will be difficulties, but what matters most is the recovery that takes place in each



person's heart. I know we have the backing of people from all over the country, so there's no way we'll ever be defeated!

We will look forward to a shining future for Kamaishi with a song on our lips and sunshine in our hearts as we take this road of hope a step at a time.

## Protecting students' lives through daily training and disaster prevention awareness

Immediately after the earthquake, Kazutaka Yamamoto, an elementary school teacher, evacuated the students of his school and protected their lives. Telling his students, "I especially want those who have experienced loss to become happy," he continues giving them daily encouragement.



**Kazutaka Yamamoto**

(Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture)

## School swallowed up by the tsunami

The elementary school where I worked was located about two hundred meters from the shore of Okirai bay.

The violent shaking started just as I entered the staff room after finishing a class for special needs students. The shaking was so strong that a spiral staircase on the side of the school was torn away from the building.

The school's principal told us, "The tsunami will be coming. Let's get out of here now!!" So I ran back up to the second floor and went around the classrooms, calling to the students to evacuate to high ground.

Just the previous year, a bridge that provided direct access to high ground in the event of a major quake had been completed, so we quickly evacuated the students across that bridge.

Tsunamis over the centuries have repeatedly inflicted major damage in the area, such as those generated by the 1933 Sanriku Earthquake and the 1960 Chile Earthquake, so most schools along the coast held annual evacuation drills. Our school had its drill on March 1, just ten days before the earthquake.

Further, a fairly large earthquake that struck off the Sanriku coast on March 9 caused a tsunami of about 60-centimeters, and we evacuated the school at that time

also.

With that recent experience under their belts, the kids did not panic, and they handled the situation fairly calmly.

With Kazutaka's guidance, seventy-three students and teachers were all safely evacuated. Says Kazutaka, "The most important step in preparing for disaster is regular practice."

The tsunami arrived about thirty minutes after the earthquake. The first wave only floated some cars in the school yard, but as it started to recede, a second black flood that rose up fifteen meters arrived, entirely swallowing up the three-storey school building.

As I watched this sight from the place where we huddled on high ground, I wondered whether I was dreaming, and thought about how if this had happened while the kids were at home, many of them might have been lost to the water.

I passed the rest of that day and the following night together with the children in the public hall on high ground. Naturally, I was worried about family and friends, but there was no way I could leave that spot.

There was no electricity, and the telephones didn't work, so my total focus had to be on protecting the children.

## Living life for lost friends

The elementary school where I worked was scheduled to be merged with two other nearby schools in 2012, but due to the earthquake, the merger was carried out following the earthquake. Since this was done in haste, during the first year the newly-merged school had three principals, three assistant principals, and three school songs, all of which had to be sung in turn (laughs).

I think being in an unfamiliar environment also made things hard for the children.

Since there were no classrooms to spare, I had to teach my special needs kids in a container for two years.

Each year, the schools in Ofunato City hold a “Sanriku Ofunato Story Contest”, to which students submit stories that they have written themselves. One of the fifth grade girls from our school won first prize in that contest.

The story was about the tsunami, but was written from the point of view of a hermit crab. In the story, the hermit crab relates how “Humans were so self-centered before the earthquake, but afterwards they started giving each other encouragement. Maybe humans aren’t so bad after all.”

The child who wrote that lost her beloved aunt to the tsunami. For a while, the shock of loss kept her from sleeping, and she became very despondent. However,

she recovered with encouragement from many people, and now has come to understand the treasure of human connections.

My hope is that all the children who experienced the horror of “3/11” will grow and achieve happiness in their lives.

I also hope they will develop greater awareness of the importance of contributing to their home region. Nothing would make me happier than for them to become adults who can contribute to the Tohoku area.

Kazutaka determined to strive in the stead of his lost friends and acquaintances, and continues giving encouragement to individuals affected by the disaster.

Just about every week, I visit the temporary housing facilities set up for refugees and talk to them about their concerns. Those concerns seem to be changing as time passes, and I think worries about the future are looming large.

Although the road to reconstruction is faced with great difficulty, we are determined to advance a step at a time, united together through stronger mutual ties.

When I think about all those who were lost, the sadness is too deep for words. I can’t help but think, why did such

a thing have to happen?

But for just that reason, all those people will never be forgotten, be it ten years from now or twenty. Those of us who remain must live through this as much for the sake of those who died as for ourselves, and I firmly believe that doing this is a part of the mission I must fulfill.

## **Back to the sea at Rikuzentakata, once again hoisting the “Big Catch” flag of victory!**

Masahiko Murakami is a fisherman of many years, and also did sea farming of Sanriku seaweed, scallops, and rock oysters. Although many of his fishing acquaintances left the business after the great earthquake, Masahiko bought a new boat and has returned to the sea.



**Masahiko Murakami**



**Fumiko Murakami**

(Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture)

## A sight I'd rather forget

**Fumiko:** When the earthquake struck, I was at our house. I was cutting pickles in the kitchen when all of a sudden a great shaking started. The shaking was so strong that it knocked the kettle off the stove, and it went on for a long time. I dashed out of the house still holding the knife.

**Masahiko:** I went offshore that day to collect seaweed from my farm, and I had finished harvesting and returned to my workplace at the port when the quake hit.

I immediately thought, "A tsunami's coming," so I moved a forklift that I'd just purchased to high ground. Then I went to help a fellow fisherman pull his boat out of the water, but the winch wouldn't work because the electricity was out. So we weren't able to pull the boat up.

As we were doing this, we could see the tide racing out. The water withdrew so far that we could see the seabed even in deep places. It was very creepy.

"This is awful," I thought, and immediately hurried to my home, which is on high ground.

The tsunami arrived about forty minutes after the earthquake. As it turned out, my boat and my new forklift were swept away by the receding water.

**Fumiko:** Our house is on high ground, so we could see the town being swallowed up by the waves. I remember

a two-storey building floating away, apparently entirely intact.

**Masahiko:** I wasn't a minute too soon in running home. If I'd stayed any longer, I probably would have been swept away too. Like they say, when a tsunami comes, you don't go back for things, or even go after family members, but immediately strike out for high ground on your own. Everyone has to look out for themselves. Wives must flee on their own, and so must their husbands. Each must flee to high ground independently as fast as possible.

Many people were lost because they went back for something important, or went off looking for someone.

**Fumiko:** The hardest thing to deal with is the loss of so many friends who were fine just the day before. The shock was so great, I thought I would die myself.

They say "building something takes a lifetime, but in destruction only a moment." Truly, everything that we had built was destroyed in the blink of an eye.

Although I can't forget it, it's a scene I do not like to remember.

**Masahiko:** But for rebuilding, you also have to forget. There are people who cannot forget, and for that reason they cannot get over it.

Including those who were never found, Rikuzentakata lost 1,700 people to the tsunami, 7.2% of its population. The survivors were faced with a severe battle to begin rebuilding.

**Masahiko:** Although our house was OK, for quite a while no food was available, and since we gave everything that we had to the neighbors, we had nothing to eat ourselves (laughs).

**Fumiko:** Our neighbors had lost their houses to the tsunami, and having fled with just the clothes on their backs, we wanted to do for them what we could. Before we knew it, we had given away all of our harvested seaweed and our rice too (laughs).

I just wanted them to have something to eat, so that their bellies would feel better.

**Masahiko:** The power outage lasted for about two months. The water was out too, so we would bring water from the river in buckets and boil it for hot water, which we used to bathe.

**Fumiko:** I can tell you that when you eat in the dark, you can't tell what you are eating, and it doesn't taste good.

### **Encouraged by support from all over the country**

**Masahiko:** Following the quake, I spent the days

removing debris that was scattered around the port. That had to be done, or it wouldn't be possible to go out fishing or to resume farming.

**Fumiko:** Three days after the earthquake, the Self Defense Force started delivering relief supplies. We were so grateful. Even now, I get tears in my eyes when I think about everything they did.

**Masahiko:** We also received great assistance from our fellow members of the Soka Gakkai. Many people came to help from Hokkaido, Aomori Prefecture and so forth.

**Fumiko:** We were keeping a dog, and it was also hard not being able to find anything for it to eat. Learning of that, one of the Soka Gakkai members made a special trip to Tono [a city in central Iwate Prefecture] to buy it food.

There was another young man who, saying he couldn't find words of encouragement, played the harmonica for us.

**Masahiko:** After the quake, members from Hyogo Prefecture came three times to give us encouragement. They said, "After what we went through in the wake of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, we couldn't just sit by."

**Fumiko:** Afterwards, we were invited to Hyogo, where we took part in an exchange meeting. After living among mountains of debris, seeing the happy faces of all the members at the bright hall really helped put us in a

positive mood.

**Masahiko:** Because of quake, we met students of an elementary school in Machida City, Tokyo. That led to me wanting to show them a real “Big Catch” flag. So we loaned them the “Big Catch” flag of our own boat, the Eikou Maru.

**Fumiko:** After our boat sank, the flag was all we had left. The students sent us a video showing a Sports Day meet in which the school used the flag.

Later on, the students came to Rikuzentakata to give us a “Big Catch” flag that they’d made themselves. That was a very welcome gift.

Due to the earthquake, many fishermen have quit the business. Masahiko says that he also considered quitting. But in the end, he purchased a new fishing vessel, named it the “No. 3 Eikou Maru,” and went back to the sea.

**Masahiko:** When I started out as a fisherman a quarter of a century ago, I had twenty-eight fellow fishermen working together. Now that number has dwindled to six.

Part of the problem is that we are all getting old, but a lot of boats were sunk, and there’s no telling how much wreckage litters the floor of the ocean.

Then there are some who have quit saying that they fear

the ocean.

**Fumiko:** After seeing that tsunami, maybe fearing the ocean is the normal reaction. Although not all the boats were destroyed, there are some that haven’t been back to sea since the earthquake. And I imagine that even those who’ve resumed fishing are still struggling internally.

**Masahiko:** I thought about quitting myself. And I thought that quitting would be the easy thing to do. I agonized greatly about it, but ultimately decided that there was no choice but to pick up again and carry on.

And one reason I returned is that life as a fisherman is really very appealing. The more you work, the more you make, and you get to eat well too (laughs). Freshly caught sea urchin and abalone are really quite delicious! I think being a fisherman is the best work in the world.

**Fumiko:** And a lot of people have told me, “We’d really like to eat Mr. Murakami’s seaweed again.” That gives us a big boost.

**Masahiko:** Just the other day, I took in sixty-one kilograms of abalone. That’s my biggest catch since the port opened (laughs).

A catch weighing in at double digits is cause for celebration, so sixty-one kilograms is really something. My seaweed harvests have also been tops.

**Fumiko:** Even though conditions are difficult, we want to

demonstrate victory in our own lives.

We want to live life each day without regret, so “defeat is not an option”!

## **Building a batting center to keep promise to son**

After losing seven members of his family to the tsunami, Kiyohide Chiba succeeded in overcoming despair together with his grade-school son. Realizing their dream of building a batting center, father and son are moving forward together toward reconstruction.



**Kiyohide Chiba**

(Kesenuma City, Miyagi Prefecture)



## **A narrow escape, clinging to a bridge railing**

On the day of the earthquake, we were at our family's milk dealership. The shaking was so strong that it knocked me to hands and knees. When the shaking subsided, I sent seven members of the family (everyone except for myself and my son, who was a third-grader in elementary school at the time) off in two cars to take refuge at our house, which is located on high ground.

Not long thereafter, I saw the black waters of the tsunami approaching. In panic, I climbed to the building's second floor, but that was soon swallowed up by the water. Frantically, I climbed out onto the roof, but just as I reached it, the whole building started floating. I had no choice but to cling to the roof and let the current take me where it would. After a while, the roof was torn loose from the building with a screeching sound, and I was thrown out in the black waves. In that instant, I thought, "This is the end."

Nonetheless, I struggled to keep afloat, grasping at pieces of debris but then sinking, only to rise again and grasp at other pieces. This happened time and again. The down jacket I was wearing soon became waterlogged, and as it started to drag me down, I discarded it. The small pieces of debris wouldn't keep me afloat, but presently I

found a large piece, and clinging to that I managed to hold out until I felt the flow of the tsunami begin to reverse. At that point, I knew that unless I did something, I would be dragged out to sea. Struggling against the current, I managed to thrust my arm into the railing of a bridge just as I was about to hit it, and there I clung, narrowly hanging on to the railing and to life.

After a while, I managed to crawl on top of the bridge. It was about that time that the sun went down. It was very cold, my feet were bare, and then it began to snow. Later, I learned that three of my ribs were broken, but at the time I was much too cold to feel any pain.

Looking for a way to preserve even the slightest warmth, I used a stick to fish a large piece of styrofoam out of the current. I broke this up and stuffed the pieces into my clothes.

I thought that I would die if I fell asleep, so as I shivered on the bridge, I screamed and yelled until, after a while, I lost consciousness. When I awoke, it was morning.

"Ah, I'm still alive," was the thought that ran through my head at that moment. In the same instant I thought, "If only that was all a dream." But when I brushed the snow away from my body and arose, the desolation that met my eyes was beyond all imagining.

I started heading for an evacuation center, and along the

way was given some sugar melted in warm water by the operator of a flower shop. I will never forget how delicious that water was, or how grateful I was to receive it.

Kiyohide's son, who was at the elementary school when the quake struck, was safely evacuated, and father and son were reunited three days after the earthquake. However, nothing was heard of the other seven members of his family, who had tried to escape by car.

It was three weeks later that I received notice from the police of my family's death. When I went to the mortuary, I found all seven of them there, all lined up: my wife and two young daughters, my father- and mother-in-law, and my nephew. They were all found dead in their cars.

When I saw the bodies, I nearly collapsed, but at the same time thought, "I don't have any time for crying." The reality of the earthquake's aftermath was just too overwhelming.

For a long time, I couldn't bring myself to tell my son about our family's deaths. Every time I returned to the evacuation center, I'd tell him, "No word today, they still haven't been found." On the other hand, as we bathed together, I'd tell him, "We have to be ready for the worst, we might never see them again." I was trying to prepare

him gradually for when I would have to break the news.

It wasn't until three days before the funeral that I managed to tell my son the truth.

Letting him see the bodies would have been too cruel, so I told him, "Let's just keep the good memories." All he said was, "OK."

The first time my son shed any tears was when we went to the crematorium. There, for the first time, he cried out loud.

Perhaps that released some pent-up grief, for afterwards he put on a brave face and assisted by greeting mourners and guiding them to their seats.

Later, he would not speak of his lost family members, to the point where I wondered whether he had actually forgotten them. Now I think he was trying to be considerate of my feelings.

### **Promise to build a batting center**

After the forty-ninth day memorial service was completed, Kiyohide turned to rebuilding the family milk dealership. It was a new start from zero. At that time, trying to think of a way to give encouragement to his son, he hit upon the idea of building a batting center.

I played baseball while in intermediate and high school, and my son, a Little Leaguer, loved baseball too, so after the quake we played catch together almost every day.

One day, during a break from work, I took my son for a visit to a batting center in Oshu City, Iwate Prefecture. Seeing my son there, dripping with sweat and completely absorbed in hitting the pitches, I thought to myself, “This is it!”

Thereafter, I made the hour and a half-long car trip to the batting center with my son just about every month. As we were on the way home one day, my son said, “It would be great if there were a batting center in Kesenuma. Papa, why don’t you build one? I have lots of friends who would love to practice batting, if only they could.” And on the spot, without thinking much about it, I said, “OK, I’ll do it.” I thought it would be easy to buy a pitching machine and set it up on an empty lot with a net.

But as days passed and I buried myself in work, I forgot all about the promise until my son came to me and said, “Papa, when are you going to build it?” And I thought to myself, “He’s serious! In all the world, I am the only person he can rely on. If I break that promise, there’s no telling how it will affect my son, and I could never forgive myself if I let him down.” It was then that I got serious. “I WILL build a batting center in Kesenuma!”

However, making the determination was one thing. Getting hold of the needed capital and land for construction was quite another. Having only the milk dealership as a source of income, I decided to try creating an original product. After much trial and error, what I came up with was a yogurt product named “Yogurt of hope”, wishing it bring hope to Kesenuma!

While I intended to use the profits from this to build the batting center, the money didn’t exactly rush in. I held product exhibitions and visited recovery events held around the country, selling the yogurt everywhere I went. After a while, my efforts were taken up by television and newspapers, and I starting receiving orders from all over the country.

Many people helped support construction of the batting center. For one, the operator of a golf driving range said that he was closing his business, and offered to give me his nets and net supports. Another was a civil engineering company in Ibaraki Prefecture that offered to provide dump truck loads of dirt for landscaping, as well as an offer of a land loan. Thanks to support from people around the country, we were finally in a position to begin construction.

Our batting center opened on March 30, 2014. We named it “Kesenuma Phoenix”, expressing our hope for

the city's rebirth from the ashes of disaster. Also, we built the center with seven driving positions, one for each of the lost members of our family.

Kiyohide has a sign on the wall of his room that says, "A hard winter is always followed by a warm spring! Therefore, never lose hope! Never, ever give up!" Whenever hard reality seemed overwhelming, he would look at that sign, repeat its words to himself, and keep on moving.

After losing my family, I became in a way two people, one who was always weeping over misfortune, and another who was always striving mightily. After going on this way for a while, I asked myself, "What would my lost family members have wanted of me?" And in that instant, I realized that they would certainly wish for my happiness.

From the moment of that realization, I decided to quit being a person who wept, and become one who worked and took action on behalf of others. And it was from that moment that my hope was reborn.

People talk about the importance of "reconstructing the heart" alongside "reconstructing the town," but I think "reconstructing the heart" really means searching for a new person in yourself. Going back to the way things were before the disaster might be "restoration," but it would

not be "reconstruction." I think that truly "reconstructing the heart" can only be achieved by rediscovering that new person in yourself, and it is from the moment of that discovery that one becomes once again capable of having hopes and dreams.

Though our batting center, I hope to bring many dreams to Kesenuma. And one of the dreams I have now is to establish a sister city relationship between Kesenuma and Tokyo's Chofu City, the place where I was raised.

More than anything, I want to be a "life guide" for my son, the one remaining member of my family. I want him to see a father whose spirit is indomitable, and who will continue pursuing his dreams no matter the troubles encountered along the way.

# Taking up the challenge of regional recovery in the aftermath of one of the world's greatest disasters

Ken Matsuda took part in aid programs for refugees and displaced persons in the Middle East, Africa, and various countries in Asia. Following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, he moved to Kesenuma City in the heart of the disaster zone and began assisting with regional recovery and development efforts.



**Ken Matsuda**

(Kesenuma City, Miyagi Prefecture)

## Learned of the disaster while watching TV news in Indonesia

I think it was probably hearing stories my maternal grandfather told when I was very young about his war-time experiences that subconsciously motivated me to become involved in overseas humanitarian assistance activities. The horror of war shocked me, and I think hearing those stories engraved the value of peace deep into my heart.

Growing up, my first job was in general industry, which didn't involve any humanitarian assistance activities at all, but when I saw news of the "9/11" terror attacks that hit America in 2001, I had a strong desire to participate in volunteer activities in New York well up in my heart. I was obsessed by the idea, and contacted various international cooperation organizations, which eventually resulted in a position, but one that involved transporting supplies to Afghanistan.

Although I wound up going to Afghanistan instead of New York, and although that journey wound up lasting for four months rather than the originally scheduled two weeks, the experiences of that time developed into positions with various international cooperation organizations, allowing me to take up support work in war

zones and major disaster areas.

When the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck, I was just about to return to Japan from activities in East Timor. I first learned of the earthquake from television while sitting in a dining room in Indonesia. “Oh, how awful,” I thought, and hastily made arrangements for return to Japan, hoping to enter the disaster zone as soon as possible.

From previous experience, I know that doing the same things as others during an emergency is liable to result in getting stuck, so I decided to return to Japan by a different route.

The usual route that people take when returning from Indonesia is to enter Japan through Narita airport. Instead, I took a flight that went to Kansai International. From there, I headed for Tokyo by Shinkansen, but wary of becoming stuck at large stations, I got off at Kakegawa Station in Shizuoka Prefecture and headed from there to Tochigi Prefecture by rental car. I knew a place there where I could get a ride on a helicopter.

The place I was flying to was Kesennuma City in Miyagi Prefecture. The destination was determined partly by the helicopter’s range. I needed to go as far north as possible and still leave the helicopter with enough fuel for its return trip.

Another reason for selecting Kesennuma was that it was a place where support was likely to stall. The transportation backbone of the Tohoku region is made up of the Shinkansen train line and the Tohoku Expressway. Thinking that most support would rely on ground transportation, I reasoned that relief would first reach places that could easily be accessed from these two transportation trunks.

The team I was travelling with discussed the matter, and we decided that we should land in Kesennuma because its location on the coast made it hard to access by land, and it was a place with a sizable population and economy.

Ken Matsuda returned from Indonesia and entered the disaster zone on March 12, the day after the earthquake. With commuters stranded in Tokyo and the nation numb with shock, this was an extraordinarily rapid response.

### **Cooperation as “partners” rather than as “supporters”**

Once we entered Kesennuma, we took measures based on all our previous experience. We made estimates of supplies that would be needed, looking ahead three days, a week, and a month in the future, and made arrangements to

obtain them.

However, it is really difficult to visualize recovery in the medium and long term. Never before has the world seen such a huge disaster in a developed country in an area with an aging population. As this went beyond all our experience, we didn't have any ready answers. And so, we took each day as it came, fumbling our way as best we could.

For medium to long-term support, I think it is important to discuss problems with local residents and act together with the residents to come up with solutions. To do this, I feel it is important to engage with regional society as "partners," rather than as "supporters."

Therefore, I established a company in Kesenuma which I named "pensea." The mission of this company is to team up with producers in the fields of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, as well as marine product processing companies, providing them with design and marketing support aimed at broadly conveying the appeal of the region's industry.

For example, even if a marine product processing company is reconstructed, it will be faced with a lack of sales channels. This is because while many companies sold processed products to supermarkets before the earthquake, when they were forced to stop operation

due to the disaster, the supermarkets had no choice but to switch to other suppliers. Consequently, processing companies do not have sales channels available even if they rebuild. So, we opened up an online shop together with a marine product processing company, and created a new brand for direct sale to customers.

In forming such teams, one of the issues we encountered was differences in perception between management teams of different generations. Many serving company presidents are in their seventies, and even when younger-generation folk in their twenties and thirties think of new approaches, the older generation tends to want to rely on their own experience when rebuilding. Moreover, many of these company presidents are veteran survivors of turbulent times and have very sharp instincts.

Under such circumstances, starting up a new business requires making various compromises. So, we joined up with the management teams of such companies to combine hands and brains in undertaking challenges together.

Now we "escort" the people who are responsible for the regional economy and work together with them on developing quality products and marketing them widely.

Based on his experience with support activities both



overseas and in the Tohoku region, Ken Matsuda speaks of his renewed impressions of Japanese culture and the strength of the people of Tohoku.

Japan is blessed with a well-developed infrastructure, as well as many outstanding people with a high level of social awareness. Such people are found not only in international cooperation organizations like our own, but increasingly in humanitarian assistance groups that run under the auspices of government, volunteer groups, and private industry.

However, Japan is an aging society, and so the number of young people is decreasing. And that, I think, is the challenge.

Developing countries lack social safety nets and well-developed infrastructure, making conditions very difficult. However, they have many young people. Despite the poor conditions, the eyes of children shine. And there is where I feel the future.

Of course, we have also encountered many bright young children in the Tohoku disaster area. We've even met children who tell stories about funny experiences they had in the midst of their trying life as refugees. We've also met children who express appreciation for the efforts being made by adults. I am sure that all such positive memories

will contribute to the growth of these young people and development of a sense of mission.

Now, in 2016, nearly five years after the disaster, we are undertaking a new project in cooperation with regional producers which aims to make new products and services available to overseas markets. More specifically, we have created a network that includes overseas creators, and beside selling Tohoku products overseas, we are distributing publicity aimed at enticing tourists from overseas to come to Tohoku. To start with, this coming March we plan to introduce products at a festival in Hawaii.

It is with gratitude that I make this report of the progress that has been made in the Tohoku region to the people from around the world who have contributed so generously of their support from the time immediately following the disaster.



# A billboard, “Pull together! Ishinomaki,” and building connections through “Gallant Sunflowers”

“Pull together! Ishinomaki” and the billboard that Ken'ichi Kurosawa erected on the site of his former home have become a symbol of reconstruction. “Gallant Sunflowers” sprouting next to the billboard have become messengers carrying an unforgettable reminder of the disaster to the world.



**Ken'ichi Kurosawa**

(Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture)

## Survived the night by clinging to a pine tree

On the day of the quake, I was in Higashimatsushima, the city just to the southwest of Ishinomaki. The terrifying shaking went on and on, and I remember the building across the street swaying like a bowl of jelly, so much that I thought it would topple onto me.

Once the shaking subsided, I tried to return home, which was also my business place. I worked in the piping business, and it occurred to me that my services might be of help in restoring vital lifelines.

Heading for Ishinomaki in my car, I received a call from my wife. She said she was out of the house, but was heading home. I told her “OK, so am I.” Immediately after that, the tsunami warning sounded. I tried calling my wife back to tell her to run, but I couldn't reach her no matter how many times I tried. All I could think of was getting to her, and I didn't pause.

The opposite lane was jammed with fleeing vehicles, but I kept going up the coast road. Then ahead I saw something that looked like a barricade. At first I thought it was a no-entry sign, but looking closer I saw it was a car being carried along by the tsunami. I made a hurried U-turn and tried to flee, but found the tsunami was coming at me from the other direction too. I was trapped.

I thought, "I can't stay here," so I abandoned the car and climbed a tree. However, the tree's thin branches snapped under my weight, and I fell down head first. Scrambling back up the bank, I jumped into a pine tree and climbed for my life. Immediately below, the tsunami was flowing past at a fearsome rate, and the height of the water was steadily rising.

Shrubbery and vehicles floated by. I saw another person clinging to a tree just like me, but presently he disappeared. I thought he was probably swept away.

From the tree, I was able to reach my wife once by phone, but she just said, "I'm at home," and then I lost the connection.

Snow started falling, and it began to get dark. I could hear people screaming and calling for help in the distance, but there was nothing whatsoever that I could do. I clung to that tree throughout the night.

When morning came, I got down from the tree and started walking home. The rows of houses that had been there the day before were all gone, and the whole area was submerged in water. It was just like a lake. Walking through water that came up to my knees, I walked on and on. I couldn't see through the water, and I repeatedly fell into ditches and manholes.

Looking in the direction of my home, it seemed the

area was shrouded in clouds. That was smoke from fires. Shouting my wife's name, I continued walking through the muddy water. But my voice was drowned out by the rotor noise from a circling helicopter.

Waves of fear and anxiety poured over me.

Because of the fires, I couldn't reach my house. "It's hopeless," I thought, "she might be gone." My tears wouldn't stop.

But I didn't stop looking, and after searching all day, I finally found her, alive, at the Hiyoriyama refugee center. When I saw her, my legs gave way and I collapsed to the floor. I couldn't speak at all.

Mrs. Kurosawa says that her house half collapsed when it was struck by another house being carried along in the torrent. Amidst the wreckage of walls and roof, she stood in the ruin of her second floor room until she was rescued from the midst of the flood before sunset.

### **Erected a billboard: "Pull together! Ishinomaki"**

Following the disaster, everyone was depressed as we looked for missing family or the remnants of our homes. A search for bodies got underway, and the dead were lined up wrapped in blankets as they were found. Our

possessions were gone along with people we loved, and everything seemed hopeless.

Seeing this, I thought that I had to do something, and I asked myself what I as a survivor could do.

The lot where my house once stood faced a road, and the location was visible from the Hiyoriyama refugee center, so I hit upon the idea of erecting a billboard to boost people's spirits.

After collecting pieces of plywood that had been dropped by the receding waters, I asked a carpenter friend to help me erect the sign. Then I got together with two friends, and the three of us painted the words, "Pull together! Ishinomaki" on the sign. We painted the word "Ishinomaki" in blue because, even though it had been devastated by the tsunami, it was still a town of the sea.

That was just a month after the earthquake. The big sign they built from wreckage and debris measures 1.8 meters in height and stretches 10.8 meters in width, and after it was picked up by the media, it became a symbol of reconstruction that attracted attention even from abroad.

By and by, people began laying flowers by the billboard. At first I thought this was strange, but Miyagi Prefecture's Ishinomaki city incurred a tremendous cost in human

casualties.

I think that people just picked the spot as a place where they could deposit their feelings.

Truth be told, before erecting the billboard, I was conflicted about whether I should do so. I wondered whether it was appropriate to put up such a structure at a time when people were still suffering even from lack of sufficient food.

But while I was putting up the sign, an old neighborhood fellow told me, "That's the way to do it! I'm pulling too!" That made me feel that the sign had meaning.

For some people, the words "Pull together" are still hard to deal with. While I recognize that some people feel that way, I want to keep putting the message out there.

### **"Gallant Sunflowers" as a "messenger of tradition"**

Thinking that I'd like to bring some color back to the town, which had been reduced to colorless rubble, I planted some flower seedlings around the billboard.

One day while watering the flowers and cutting back weeds around the billboard, my wife found some stray sunflowers growing next to the sign. I think they sprouted from seeds deposited by the tsunami. We started caring

for them, and they rapidly grew and soon produced magnificent sunflower blossoms.

We were astonished. The sludge that flowed into the area made it hard for even summer weeds to grow. Who would have thought that sunflowers could grow in a place that was inhospitable to weeds?

Several months after the disaster, the mental and physical fatigue of recovery work had reached a peak. Finding the sunflowers at just that time was a big boost. Seeing them growing valiantly in salt-contaminated ground made me think, "If sunflowers can do it, so can I."

I started calling these blooms the "Gallant Sunflowers," and began posting updates on their progress through social media. The responses I received showed that this gave joy to many people.

Ken'ichi Kurosawa packaged up the sunflower seeds ten to a bag and gave them to people as tokens of gratitude and appreciation. Many of those people took joy in planting those seeds in their own homes. Ken'ichi says that impressed him with the "Gallant Sunflower's" power.

Thinking to pass the "Gallant Sunflowers" on to the future, I started naming them by generation. The idea was that once I'd reached the 50th generation of "Gallant

Sunflowers," when children asked about the meaning of "generation 50," I could use them to tell them the story of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. So the "Gallant Sunflowers" may become "messengers of tradition" for telling about the earthquake and natural disaster.

Now the gallant sunflowers have reached their sixth generation. I think of the successive generations as ticks marking the passage of time.

With the cooperation of many people, the "Gallant Sunflowers" of Ishinomaki have become messengers of hope and friendship to India, China, America, England, Brazil, France, Italy and other countries around the world.

Presently, I am working through a civic group called the "Pull together! Ishinomaki" association which I founded. The group promotes events and activities such as leaving memorials at the "Pull together! Ishinomaki" billboard, traditionalizing the stories of the disaster for children, and using the "Gallant Sunflowers" to build traditions for transmission to the future.

Together with our many friends, we will go on "pulling together" for the sake of Ishinomaki and the surrounding region.

# Continuing life near the border of the evacuation zone

The home of the Matsumoto family is located about twenty-one kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Although many people have left, the Matsumoto family has deep roots in the area and pursues happiness and reconstruction in their original home.



**Yoshihiro Matsumoto**



**Yuko Matsumoto**

(Minamisoma City, Fukushima Prefecture)

## Choosing to continue living at home

**Yuko:** When the earthquake struck, I was away from home. My husband was at work, my son Takuya and youngest daughter, Maki, were at school, and my oldest daughter, Yumi, was at home with her grandfather. The shaking was so severe that I was sure my house must have collapsed!

I tried phoning my husband many times, but I couldn't get through to him. I was starting to feel frantic, but told myself to stay calm and went to the elementary school to pick up my younger daughter.

**Yoshihiro:** I immediately headed straight home. When I got there, I found my older daughter and her grandfather waiting outside. They were afraid to go back in the house.

**Yuko:** I drove home with my younger daughter, and when my older daughter saw my face, she burst into tears.

**Yoshihiro:** She was afraid that her mother had been swept away in the tsunami. Later, my son came home from high school, and we had all the family safely together again.

**Yuko:** I think it was about 11 p.m. that night that we heard over the disaster warning system "There is a shortage of living supplies and food at refugee centers." Thinking "This is no time to be stingy," I gathered up what blankets and rice balls we had in the house and took them to the city

hall.

The area was crowded with young people who were bringing supplies. Seeing them, I thought “Well, there’s hope for Japan yet.”

At the time of the earthquake, the Matsumoto family were all in different locations, but they were all safe. However, their relief was soon shattered, as the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station ushered in a life accompanied by constant fear of radiation.

**Yuko:** Immediately after the nuclear power plant accident, confusion reigned, and the authorities couldn’t decide what to do, first ordering residents to shelter indoors, and then later canceling the order. On the 12th, one day after the quake, an order was issued to evacuate all residents from within a 20-kilometer radius of the nuclear power plant.

**Yoshihiro:** At the time, we weren’t sure whether our house was inside the 20-kilometer radius, so we stayed put. We later found out that our house is located about twenty-one kilometers from the plant.

**Yuko:** We received text messages from people who did evacuate telling of roads that were so crowded they couldn’t get out of their driveways, and of long lines at

public toilets, so we decided not to evacuate in haste.

Then on the evening of the 14th, we heard on the news that pressure was building up inside the Unit 2 reactor’s containment vessel. However, residents did not receive any information about this from the local authorities.

And then we started receiving text messages like, “Heading inland now, almost no residents left,” and “We are leaving soon too. Thanks for everything.” We began to wonder, “Should we be staying here?”

**Yoshihiro:** In the end, we wound up evacuating Minamisoma at about 6 a.m. on the 15th, and the explosion at the Unit 2 reactor was reported shortly thereafter. I think we were just in the nick of time.

**Yuko:** So off we went, with my 88-year-old father-in-law and our three children, heading where we didn’t know. We thought there wouldn’t be any stores open, so we took along what food and spices we had in the house, together with water and so forth.

Waking up our sleeping children, we fashioned masks of wet handkerchiefs, covered their heads with disaster hoods, and started heading single-mindedly north.

**Yoshihiro:** We wound up taking refuge in the home of a friend in Soma City. The day we evacuated, the area within a radius of twenty to thirty kilometers of the nuclear plant was declared a “shelter indoors” area. The “shelter indoors”

order remained in effect until April 22.

**Yuko:** We stayed at our friend's house for eleven days. Then when we went back to check our house in Minamisoma on March 26, our children said, "we absolutely want to stay here!" I think that the insecurity of staying in an unfamiliar place weighed on them heavily.

**Yoshihiro:** And at that point, we made up our minds that we would stay at our house in Minamisoma, and live while taking shelter indoors.

### **The strength people show in dire straits**

**Yuko:** While some people evacuated Minamisoma, others stayed behind. In either case, it was a difficult decision.

**Yoshihiro:** At first, very little in the way of relief supplies made it into the "shelter indoors" area, and we would stand in line for up to two hours to get bread and canned food.

**Yuko:** We received notice that the schools our children attended would be closed in March, and then the closure was extended through April. Then we were suddenly informed that we should evacuate, and submit requests for transfer to other schools. We were stunned.

**Yoshihiro:** The gymnasium of our elementary school was transformed into a outpost of the national self defense

force, and the high school's gymnasium was pressed into service as a mortuary. Ultimately, facilities at a school located outside the 30-kilometer radius were borrowed, and our children started going to school by bus every morning.

**Yuko:** That one school building was shared between several schools. For example, the first floor was used by one elementary school, and the second floor was used by another. I heard that lunches were very simple because the lunch center was also providing meals for the evacuation center, and they usually consisted of just a couple of rice balls wrapped in cellophane, a stick of cheese fish paste, and milk.

Under the circumstances, some children transferred to other schools. When their friends transferred, our kids would come home depressed. That made things hard on their parents as well.

**Yoshihiro:** Subsequently, the school's graduation ceremony was held at the original facility, and the evacuation of the school ended in February of the following year.

**Yuko:** Looking back, it very trying living entirely indoors and trying to trying to minimize circulation to keep radiation out. We didn't even use the ventilation fans when we were cooking or bathing. We kept the air conditioner



off, and hung up laundry indoors to dry.

Sheltering indoors divides people from each other, resulting in isolation. When you think about radiation under such circumstances, you come to fear death. That makes the experience we had of getting back together with friends in the area an unforgettable experience.

Today, Minamisoma City is divided into areas where it is expected that the residents have difficulties in returning for a long time, areas in which the residents are not permitted to live, areas to which evacuation orders are ready to be lifted, and areas where people can come and go as they please. Both people who have stayed in Minamisoma and those who have moved elsewhere suffer from various feelings.

**Yoshihiro:** The other day, a meeting was held to make decisions about reconstruction in Minamisoma, and many people who formerly lived in the area hurried to join in. They all looked very happy to be meeting old friends again.

Watching their expressions and manner, I thought, “The people who have remained, and those who have started new lives elsewhere, all of them have missions.” Even though some live elsewhere, it is the connections of the heart that matter most.

**Yuko:** Several years have now passed since the disaster, and day by day, the feeling grows that “We must make sure that no one else ever has to suffer from such an experience.” At the same time, through this experience we also came to feel that human beings are capable of strength and kindness even under the most extreme circumstances.

**Yoshihiro:** That is very true. While we witnessed the terrible power of nature, we also saw that the power of people is amazing.

Our house is located twenty-one kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, just a short distance outside of the 20-kilometer evacuation zone. It is, so to speak, the “front line,” but I believe there is meaning in living in this place. While we are still feeling our way, I am confident that we will continue advancing.



# Unbroken by nuclear disaster, reopens shop at evacuation housing project, energizing people of home town

Sakae Akaishizawa and his wife of many years, Toshiko, made their living as operators of the “Chuka Kohaku” Chinese restaurant in Iitate-mura, Fukushima Prefecture. Although they were forced to evacuate following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, their fighting spirit would not admit defeat, and they later opened up a new restaurant. This has become a haven for people from their old hometown.



**Sakae Akaishizawa**  
**Toshiko Akaishizawa**

(Iitate-mura, Fukushima Prefecture)

## Helped refugees prepare their food

The Akaishizawas first opened “Chuka Kohaku” in 1977. The restaurant was a favorite among residents of Iitate-mura for over thirty years. However, the couple’s life changed on March 11, 2011, following the Great East Japan Earthquake.

**Toshiko:** On that day, I and my husband were working in the restaurant, just like always. The instant the quake struck, I was knocked to my knees, and instinctively grasped at a customer’s legs (laughs).

My husband quickly jumped out the front of the restaurant to help some children. There is a school bus stop in front of the shop, and many children who’d just gotten off the bus were gathered out front when the quake started.

**Sakae:** The shaking was so violent that the road was undulating. When I thought about the children in front of the shop, I forgot all about my wife and customers (laughs), and leapt to their assistance. I quickly yelled at them to gather together and guided them to a nearby plaza. There was also a pregnant lady with a small child in the group.

**Toshiko:** The quake knocked out the power, but we made rice balls using what rice we had in the shop and passed

them out in the neighborhood along with pickles and the like.

**Sakae:** A rumor started that we had begun running a soup kitchen at my place, and I had to tell them that was wrong, I'm just passing these out in the neighborhood (laughs). Although the power was stopped, our rice cooker was an industrial gas-powered model, so we were able to cook rice. So I told them, "If you bring us the rice, we'll cook it for you."

Fortunately, the restaurant was unharmed. As it happened, we had finished renovating the shop shortly before the earthquake, and we had reinforcing columns installed at the time. So we thought, "If we just clean up inside, we can reopen for business. We've been protected."

However, not long thereafter, the couple's life was completely disrupted by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Iitate-mura is located almost entirely outside a 30-kilometer radius centered on Fukushima Daiichi, so at first it was not included in the evacuation zone, and it received refugees from other areas.

**Sakae:** While watching news about the disaster on TV with the village chief at the public hall, we were sorry to hear about the extent of the destruction, but at the time

we had no idea about how serious it actually was.

Then the telephone rang, and we heard that we would be receiving thousands of refugees. From then, it was like being in a war zone.

**Toshiko:** At first, Iitate-mura was not included in the exclusion zone. Instead, we began receiving many refugees from Minamisoma and other coastal towns.

**Sakae:** So many cars came that roads were completely blocked, and nothing could move. We took turns working around the clock to receive all these people. The number who evacuated to Iitate-mura reached 4,000. I was the assistant chief of the village's fire department, so preparing for the refugees and telling them where to go kept me very busy.

The public hall and gymnasium were pressed into service as emergency shelters, and the people of the village brought space heaters and blankets for the refugees from their own houses. The women of the village worked three shifts to prepare food, and morning, noon and evening walked around distributing 4,000 rice balls to people. People brought all of the food that they had in their pantries.

**Toshiko:** The biggest problem was the lack of gasoline. Deliveries to the village stopped altogether. Villagers received ration tickets good for 10 liters, but we had none

whatsoever to spare for with outsiders. Those who wanted to go on from Iitatemura to other refugee centers couldn't do so for lack of fuel. No matter how much they pleaded, there was nothing we could do.

**Sakae:** But people would come to us crying with their children. So we ended up giving them our own ration tickets.

### **Reopens restaurant at evacuation housing project**

April 11 when one month passed from the day of the earthquake. Then an evacuation order was issued for five municipalities outside the 20-kilometer radius from Fukushima Daiichi, including Iitatemura.

**Toshiko:** Iitatemura is located about forty kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi power plants, so when our evacuation order was issued, at first I couldn't feel that it was real. There was no change in the appearance of the village, and I just thought, why should we evacuate?

**Sakae:** At that time, I and other members of the fire department were putting our own needs second as we gave priority to refugees who had evacuated to Iitatemura. Then we had to evacuate the residents of Iitatemura as

well, and could only leave ourselves after everyone else was gone. We didn't have time to think about ourselves while taking care of the villagers and the refugees.

There were three people who could not be convinced to leave the village, and we had to go back to talk to them again and again.

We didn't see this as a great ordeal, it was just a matter of having to do things as they came up.

Subsequently, the Akaishizawas moved into housing that was rented by the prefecture in Iizakamachi, Fukushima.

**Sakae:** I've only been back to Iitatemura once since the evacuation. At that time it hit me that an uninhabited town is a very lonely place. Not only that, but it is located amongst the mountains, and is without power or any other services. It is truly a terrible sight. Looking at that little world that we once lived in, one gets a feeling of how happy lives can be destroyed in an instant, and overwhelmed with darkness. It is a world without light.

I stopped by our restaurant and found frying pans and pots in disarray around the inside of the shop. However, the dishware that we put away properly was mostly undamaged. When I saw that, the thought that welled up inside me was, "We can start over! I'm not giving up!"

So I began looking for a place where we could reopen the restaurant in the city where we took refuge.

**Toshiko:** But finding a suitable place wasn't that easy. Whenever we saw a place that looked right, it would be too expensive. Then just as we were about to give up, the administration of Iitatemura asked if we would be interested in opening a restaurant in Fukushima City's temporary housing project.

Although the building is a modular structure, we didn't have to pay for construction, and we were offered assistance for three quarters of the opening expenses. That gave us reason to be grateful that we had experienced so much difficulty with finding a place on our own!

The new "Chuka Kohaku" opened in November, 2011.

**Sakae:** The temporary housing project where we opened the restaurant houses about 500 people, and all of them were refugees from Iitatemura. Among them were many of our former patrons, and we thought that it would be great if we could get them and former neighbors to come. So we were staggered when three hundred customers came to the restaurant on opening day! We even had a line form outside. Folk were truly happy to see our restaurant reopen, some saying the sight of our shop sign brought tears to their eyes.

**Toshiko:** It would make me very happy for our restaurant

to become an oasis for these people. Living in cramped temporary housing is not easy, and many people live alone. I would like it to become a place where people can come to laugh and make jokes.

**Sakae:** I feel thankful that many people have said, "I hope you never stop running the restaurant here." As long as we have such customers, I want to keep the restaurant open.

At the same time, when the evacuation order on Iitatemura is lifted and people start returning to their former home, I would like to reopen "Chuka Kohaku" in Iitatemura as well.

Since there are concerns about radiation, and many people have lived in a different place for a long time, there will probably be many who will never return. In spite of that, I do want to reopen the restaurant in Iitatemura. For me, that will be giving back to the community.

I want to keep the spirit of "never give up" and work on behalf of Iitatemura's recovery.

# Helped care for refugees following the disaster, built congenial rapport and bonds of fellowship

The Kanazawas live in Hironomachi, a town located within thirty kilometers of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Although the couple were forced to evacuate after the nuclear accident, they provided constant support and encouragement to others in the days following.



**Kaneji Kanazawa**



**Kiyoko Kanazawa**

(Hironomachi, Fukushima Prefecture)

## Quick-thinking decision to evacuate to high ground

**Kiyoko:** When the earthquake hit, I was visiting my friend in the city of Iwaki. The quake's shaking was intense, greater than any I'd ever experienced, and though we all ran outside in a panic, there was nothing to hang on to, so we wound up standing with our arms wrapped around each other's shoulders until the shaking subsided.

Going into the city, we saw manholes with their covers blown off and shattered streets everywhere. Soon after, I heard that a tsunami was coming, so I took a route on the hillward side of the city to head home.

Along the way, I picked up a woman who was standing in the road soaking wet. Her car had been swept away by the tsunami, and she barely escaped with her life. Unbelievable things were happening one after another.

**Kaneji:** I was doing construction work at a thermal power plant in Hironomachi. This plant is located about twenty kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, and when the earthquake struck I was changing oil on the first floor of the No. 5 West building.

Thinking the place I was in wasn't safe, I first took refuge with some workers from another company in the building's basement. However, we soon realized that if a

tsunami came, we would be trapped by water entering the building, so we all moved to a high spot inside the grounds of the facility.

We had just reached the high spot when water started receding from the sea front, and soon we could see the sea floor of a fishing spot located near the plant. Presently, a pitch black sheet of water came rushing in, which looked like a huge iron plate. It was like watching a movie, it all seemed so unreal.

The tsunami came in seven waves. Biggest by far was the second wave, and it washed all sorts of things around inside the power plant.

My car was washed away, so that evening I wound up walking four kilometers to get back to my house.

The following day, March 12, there was a great hydrogen explosion in the containment building of Unit 1 at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Although the Kanazawas' hometown of Hironomachi is located twenty to thirty kilometers from the plant, on March 13 the population of the entire town was ordered to evacuate.

**Kiyoko:** During the evening of the 12th, the town's loudspeakers started broadcasting, "Evacuate the town," which at that point was a request for voluntary evacuation.

However, no information was given as to why we should evacuate, or where we were supposed to go.

**Kaneji:** The first thing I did was go out and look at the wind direction. Since the wind was blowing from south to north, we decided to head south.

**Kiyoko:** We headed for our family home in Iwaki to take temporary refuge there. However, along the way we received a telephone call from a fellow Soka Gakkai member who told us that many people had taken refuge in the Iwaki Culture Center. I was previously an official of the Gakkai's regional organization, so rather than head for the family home, we decided to go to the Iwaki Culture Center.

**Kaneji:** By the time we arrived, around thirty or forty people had taken refuge in the hall.

**Kiyoko:** Soon thereafter, an order was given to evacuate an area close to the Iwaki Culture Center, so on the same day we moved to the Iwaki Peace Center, which is further from the nuclear plant.

**Kaneji:** The roads were bumpy and filled with traffic, and I don't remember how we did it, but somehow or another we made it to the Peace Center.

**Kiyoko:** It was very cold that day, but the Iwaki Peace Center had electricity, and we greatly appreciated the warmth inside.



## Kept smiling to cheer others

**Kiyoko:** Our first priority was securing food. We asked Gakkai friends in the neighborhood for help, and they provided rice and vegetables and loaned us rice cookers, which helped us make ends meet for a while.

The first thing we made was rice gruel. Although we could only give each person about half a paper cup full, within two or three days we started receiving relief supplies from members all over the country. We were so grateful.

**Kaneji:** There were about a hundred and thirty refugees at the Peace Hall, including both Gakkai members and non-members. The day after we arrived, the refugees were divided into communal living teams, including a cleaning team, a cooking team, a water fetching team, and so forth. Thankfully, we also had some people who were very good at cooking, as well as a toilet specialist who was versed in odor control, a nurse, and people with other valuable skills.

**Kiyoko:** We gave a lot of attention to maintaining a positive mood in the hall. Everyone there was worried about the future, and it would have been easy to let the mood turn dark. So, hoping to keep the atmosphere as light as possible, I put effort into keeping a cheerful

expression and making people laugh.

**Kaneji:** Each morning, I would announce, “Ta-dah! I will now introduce today’s breakfast menu! Today we have rice balls made of premium Akita rice and fully ripe bananas! And Suntory beer! Oh wait, it’s Suntory water!” That would generally get a laugh and lighten things up.

**Kiyoko:** I can say this now, but there were times when putting on a smiling face seemed like an impossibility. But I reasoned that looking cheerful would help give hope to others, so I never let up while I was with people.

**Kaneji:** The Gakkai hall was not an official refugee center, so it was closed after about ten days. Before closing the hall, we met with each of the refugees individually and asked them where they would be going next. Based on their answers, we made arrangements to give each quantities of gasoline sufficient to reach their destinations and we sent them on their way.

After leaving the Peace Center, the Kanazawas’ took shelter for a while with their daughter in Kanagawa Prefecture, but before long they rented an apartment in Iwaki, after which they returned to Hironomachi once the evacuation order was lifted. However, nearly half of the evacuees from the town are still unable to return to their homes.

**Kaneji:** After a while, I received word that my company was reopening, so in the latter part of April, I returned to our house by myself. The town was still mostly uninhabited, and for some reason it seems the birds had deserted it too. Hungry dogs would follow me around, and it was a very creepy feeling.

My workplace was a complete mess, and I spent days from morning to night just cleaning up. When we finally finished after four months, everyone gave a big cheer.

**Kiyoko:** While the two of us were able to return home, there are many people who can't return even though they want to. I have friends who have taken refuge all over the country, but I still keep in touch with them.

**Kaneji:** The refugees of the nuclear accident hold a gathering called the "Utsukushima Phoenix Group" where we get together periodically for mutual encouragement. The first gathering was held in June, just three months after the disaster, but I was so happy to see people again that tears came to my eyes and I couldn't speak.

**Kiyoko:** That's right. Just seeing peoples' faces was a comfort, and made me feel much better. There was much clasping of hands and rejoicing at getting together again.

Thereafter, we've held gatherings in Tokyo, Fukushima and so forth, and each time someone comments about how their tear ducts have loosened up since the disaster

(laughs).

**Kaneji:** I think the bonds we share are especially strong because of the difficulties we have overcome together. I want us to keep on encouraging each other as we move ahead together.



# “Network of encouragement” in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

After the quake, many survivors found shelter at Soka Gakkai centers. Youth Division members and many others worked around the clock in support of disaster response efforts.



Senior Youth Division Leader, Tohoku Soka Gakkai

**Mikio Yamane**

## Refugee support began immediately after the quake

“Will the building collapse? Will I die here?”

Those thoughts ran through my head as I sat through shaking more violent than anything I’d ever experienced.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck on March 11, 2011, I was at work in the Soka Gakkai Tohoku Culture Center in Sendai City. The three minutes of shaking seemed to go on forever.

As the trembling finally started subsiding, alarm lamps lit on machines everywhere and buzzers started sounding. “We need to set up a disaster relief headquarters!”, I shouted, and immediately got in touch with the Soka Gakkai’s headquarters in Tokyo by telephone. Starting with the boilers, we began inspecting the center’s equipment and checking for injuries among people in the building.

At the time, I was one of the leaders of the Youth Division of the Soka Gakkai in Miyagi Prefecture, so I began working with my colleagues to determine conditions at other centers within the prefecture. However, our efforts to contact other centers failed. I later found out that the centers at Kesenuma and Ishinomaki had been swallowed up by the tsunami.

The first refugees started arriving at the Tohoku Culture Center about twenty minutes after the earthquake. These were followed by many other people from the surrounding area, and by 11 p.m., the number of refugees in the center had swelled to more than three hundred.

In the end, the Tohoku Culture Center extended shelter to a thousand refugees, while the fourteen centers in Miyagi Prefecture together took in three thousand, and the forty-two Gakkai centers gave shelter to up to about five thousand.

The Tohoku Culture Center served as a refugee shelter for about a month and a half. During this time, our focus in running the center was to provide maximum protection for the health and safety of those who came to us for shelter.

However, we were severely challenged by the interruption of electricity, gas, and water services, as well as inability to expect any relief supplies from the authorities. This made assuring the safety and security of refugees a challenge of great magnitude, and meeting that challenge took all our efforts.

The first problem was food. It wasn't until after 11 p.m. on the day of the quake that we hit on a way of providing our three hundred refugees with some food the next morning. Until then, we had no idea what we would give

them to eat the next day.

We had some pre-washed rice in the staff cafeteria. Neighborhood Gakkai members provided us with eight household rice cookers, and we used these to cook rice for rice balls. However, the amount of rice you can cook in a household rice cooker is very limited; only about enough for fifteen rice balls. In the meantime, the number of people taking refuge in the center was growing steadily.

Using the rice cookers and the center's emergency power supply, the management and staff of the center worked throughout the night together with local members to prepare food for the next day. As a result, by the next morning we had about a thousand small rice balls ready, which was sufficient for the moment.

Gakkai groups in neighboring prefectures quickly stepped in with help. At 2 a.m. the next morning, just twelve hours after the quake, the first shipment of emergency relief supplies arrived from the Soka Gakkai in Yamagata Prefecture. The carriers succeeded in delivering the supplies despite having to wend their way through a road network that had been shredded by the earthquake. Thanks to that effort, the next morning we were able to supplement the rice balls with water, sausage and such.

Later that same day, 5,500 rice balls arrived from Niigata Prefecture. Having experienced the Chuetsu Earthquake

in 2004 and the Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake in 2007, the members in Niigata knew what was needed and did not wait to be asked before arranging for shuttle shipments of emergency supplies such as fuel oil, drinking water, bread, and portable toilets.

Everyone at the center had moist eyes as we read handwritten messages that were included with handmade rice balls of varying shapes and sizes: “Never give up!” “Hang in there.” “We’re praying for you. Let’s get through this together.”

The supplies and messages came from all over the country, and the warmth of feeling that accompanied them helped support us when we had reached our limits of physical and mental endurance.

Along with food, sanitation was a tremendous problem. Although the center had a stock of portable toilets for emergency use, most refugees had no idea how to use them. Therefore, staff members equipped with flashlights and wearing jackets against the cold took turns waiting at the entrances to washrooms. Explanations about how to use the emergency facilities had to be provided around the clock.

I can’t adequately express my appreciation to the members who showed such dedication, saying “Anything to help the victims” as they took turns in an area where the

atmosphere became inescapably noisome.

We also had to maintain a healthy environment inside the center. Because the disaster occurred during the cold season, we made maximum use of sanitary masks and alcohol as measures to avoid spreading cold and influenza viruses.

Starting on the third day of the crisis, we began posting a daily schedule, including daily activities such as breakfast, radio exercises, ventilation, and cleaning.

Among the refugees were people who had escaped the tsunami, as well as people who didn’t know if their family members were dead or alive. They were all very anxious. We therefore took every opportunity to extend words of encouragement.

With greetings of “Good morning!” and “How do you feel today?” we would open the curtains and hold radio exercises. Our hope was that by giving people an opportunity to speak, they could dispel in some small way feelings that were pent up inside. Then, asking for help from members who were nurses and doctors, we began holding health consultations.

### **The joy of meeting old friends**

Besides supporting organization activities, my job at

the Tohoku Culture Center includes managing Gakkai facilities within the prefecture.

By the fourth day after the earthquake, we still could not determine the status of the Kesenuma Center, so I decided to go there to check it.

Because of road damage and other problems, getting there took five hours, about twice the normal time. I tried taking a route that runs adjacent to the rail line, but it was blocked by rubble.

Frustrated, I decided to go to Tome City, about an hour and a half's drive from Kesenuma, and set up a relief support headquarters for Kesenuma at the center there. There I spent the next month, working days and nights at the center to support the people of Kesenuma.

In the days following the earthquake, I was often assailed by feelings of helplessness as the true scale of the disaster became apparent.

Why did this happen in the Tohoku region? Why did the people living there, and our own fellow members, have to undergo such suffering? Why did so many people have to lose beloved members of their families?

The outrageous reality of the disaster often made me feel like my heart would burst, and I shed many tears as I often felt that my spirit would break.

As these feelings of hopelessness were reaching a peak,

the March 16, 2011 issue of the Seikyo Shimbun carried a message from Honorary President Daisaku Ikeda.

From the moment the quake subsided, the hearts of those of us who jumped into relief efforts were nearly overwhelmed by feelings of resignation and helplessness in the face of nature's irresistible fury, as well as fatigue and anxiety arising out of inability to imagine what the future might possibly hold in store. Against this, President Ikeda's words of encouragement buoyed the spirits of members and helped them find strength to look to the future: "Nothing can destroy the treasures of the heart." "I am offering solemn prayers for all your loved ones — family members and friends — who have lost their lives. This disaster is truly heartbreaking. Life, however, is eternal, and through chanting daimoku, we can transcend life and death to connect with the lives of those who have passed away." "Never be defeated! Have courage! Have hope!"

In rendering assistance to Kesenuma, we concentrated on distributing relief supplies to people who were sheltering in place in their homes. Thanks to the familiarity of long-time residents with the area, we were able to identify many people living in isolation in more remote neighborhoods, and delivered relief supplies to them as well.

Presently, people began asking us for help with clearing

rubble and such, so we started providing support in that area as well. Here, the region's young people stepped up and provided substantial assistance. These volunteer teams formed throughout the disaster region, and were later dubbed the 'Katashi-tai' (Katashi Corps), a play on the word 'katasu,' which has the dual connotations of 'cleaning up' and 'promoting victory over hardship.' I can't begin to convey the depth of my gratitude to all those who contributed assistance.

We've also made much progress on determining the status of our members. This has been a challenge, as many people had to leave their homes, and therefore cannot be reached by telephone. Membership lists for many areas were lost during the tsunami, so we relied on by word of mouth to find where individuals had taken refuge and determine what sort of losses they had suffered, and then compiled the results in lists.

As we visited people's homes, it was a joy to meet old friends again and exchange words of thanks that we had made it through the disaster safely. Such meetings were joyous occasions. It was a time when the simple act of seeing someone could be a moving experience.

I went to Kesenuma Center to check on the condition of the hall. The tsunami submerged it to above the second story level. All of the hall's equipment was ruined, and the

building was beyond salvage.

But by chance, a sheet of imitation vellum inscribed with a Gakkai song for children had survived unscathed. As this song was a symbol of the future, members were delighted with their discovery.

### **Building a disaster-resistant society**

Now almost five years have passed. Conditions in the disaster area vary greatly. Whereas all traces of the tsunami's aftermath have disappeared from some towns, in other places entire towns were destroyed, and even roads had to be rebuilt according to new plans. While some people have started new lives in reconstructed homes, others continue living in temporary housing, or are unable to return to their home towns at all.

Still, I think there is no alternative to listening to words that come from the heart of each individual still locked in the vise of suffering and sorrow, and to continue encouraging such people to find courage to continue living life positively with hope for the future.

Giving a boost to such one-on-one encouragement, from 2014 the Soka Gakkai Music Corps began holding a "Building Bonds of Hope" series of concerts. Four musical ensembles, the Soka Gloria Wind Orchestra, the Soka

Gakkai Kansai Wind Orchestra, the Soka Renaissance Vanguard, and the Shinano Male Choir (each the winner of first prizes at national competitions), have held more than seventy concerts at cultural facilities and meeting room of temporary housing units in the disaster area.

The musicians in these groups are all residents of the Tokyo and Kansai areas, and most have jobs and families of their own to care for. In seeking to encourage audiences who have been the victims of disaster, these groups have not simply held performances, but have worked to involve their audiences in “performances that we build together.” Words cannot convey the emotional impact of such efforts.

My most memorable recollection of these events is of the direct interactions that took place between ensemble members and disaster victims. Speaking with determination, the victims said, “We will never give up. We will rise to all your expectations.” The musicians, hearing such words, later said, “It felt like we were the ones being encouraged.”

What I gained from witnessing such chains of mutual encouragement — a sharp departure from the customary notion that assistance flows from relief workers to victims — was a sense of the strength of the human spirit.

The earthquake and tsunami took away so much, but I

realized that if there is anything positive that came out of it, that would be the “networks of encouragement” that emerged in the wake of the disaster. Such encouragement literally came from all over Japan and the world.

My determination is to help transmit memories of “March 11” on to future generations, and in the process contribute to building a society that is resilient in the face of disaster.

## Soka Gakkai Relief Activities Background Information

### (1) Relief and protection of refugees

Altogether, forty-two centers in three prefectures (Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima) of the Tohoku region and two prefectures (Ibaraki and Chiba) of the Kanto region provided temporary shelter to about 5,000 people, mainly local residents of the respective regions. The numbers of people taking refuge at major centers were as follows:

\*The proportion of non-members who took refuge at local Soka Gakkai centers varied from center to center. However, at many centers, such as Wakabayashi Peace Center and Furukawa Culture Center in Miyagi Prefecture, most of the refugees were non-members.

<b>Miyagi Prefecture - Number of centers used as shelter: 14</b>	
Tohoku Culture Center (Sendai)	approx. 1000 people
Wakabayashi Peace Center (Sendai)	approx. 600
Furukawa Culture Center (Osaki)	approx. 800
Ishinomaki Culture Center (Ishinomaki)	approx. 150
Ishinomaki Peace Center (Ishinomaki)	approx. 70
<b>Iwate Prefecture - Number of centers used as shelter: 6</b>	
Iwate Culture Center (Morioka)	approx. 40 people
Kamaishi Culture Center (Kamaishi)	approx. 40
Ichinoseki Culture Center (Ichinoseki)	approx. 20
<b>Fukushima Prefecture - Number of centers used as shelter: 9</b>	
Fukushima Culture Center (Koriyama)	approx. 200 people
Fukushima Peace Center (Fukushima)	approx. 150
Iwaki Peace Center (Iwaki)	approx. 150
Soma Center (Soma)	approx. 80
Haramachi Culture Center (Minamisoma)	approx. 50
<b>Ibaraki Prefecture - Number of centers used as shelter: 3</b>	
Katsuta Culture Center (Hitachinaka)	approx. 20 people
<b>Chiba Prefecture - Number of centers used as shelter: 10</b>	
Funabashi Ikeda Auditorium (Funabashi)	approx. 230 people
Asahi Culture Center (Asahi)	approx. 35

### (2) Support network

Starting immediately after the earthquake, all-out support rushed in from Soka Gakkai members throughout the country. Beginning with the Soka Gakkai's Hokkaido group, where members scraped up necessary goods and brought them by the first available ferry to Iwate, rescue arrangements were set up in Aomori, Akita, Yamagata, Niigata, Kansai, Tokyo and so on, despite the transport difficulty that resulted from damage to the road and rail network.

#### <Main Relief Supplies>

A total of 641,700 relief items were delivered through the Soka Gakkai's own network (breakdown follows):

Portable toilets	approx. 60,000 pieces
Clothing (cold weather clothing, shirts, trousers, underclothes, etc.)	approx. 24,000
Bedding (blankets, etc.)	approx. 4,700
Living ware (nursing care goods [diapers, incontinence articles, etc.] )	approx. 183,000
Beverages, foodstuffs (rice-balls, jelly, fruits, preserved foods, drinks, snacks, condiments, etc.)	approx. 296,000
Medical supplies (medicine for colds, stomach, mouthwash, bandages, etc.)	approx. 46,000
Appliances and equipment (generators, blood pressure gauges, bicycles, washing machines, dryers, water pots, portable gas burners, gas cartridge, etc. with fuel including heavy oil, light oil and gasoline, totaling approx. 8,320 liters)	approx. 33,400



### <Relief Funds>

On March 30 and 31, 2011, the following relief funds were donated in the name of the Soka Gakkai to respective local authorities:

To: Miyagi Prefecture:	¥ 100,000,000
Iwate Prefecture:	¥ 150,000,000
Fukushima Prefecture:	¥ 150,000,000
Chiba Prefecture	¥ 10,000,000
Ibaraki Prefecture	¥ 30,000,000
Sendai City	¥ 100,000,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>¥ 540,000,000</b>

\*In order to render monetary support more effectively, Soka Gakkai members were recommended through the organization's newspaper, the Seikyo Shimbun, to make individual donations of relief funds and supplies through the Japan Red Cross or other specialized agencies. Accordingly, the Soka Gakkai did not accept any donations from members.

Relief funds were also deposited to the accounts of involved organizations by 16 overseas organizations of Soka Gakkai International, (SGI) as follows:

Taiwan:	US\$ 126,400	USA:	US\$ 50,000
Hong Kong:	US\$ 266,528	Singapore:	US\$ 573,669
Canada:	US\$ 10,383	Philippines:	US\$ 60,797
Malaysia:	US\$ 348,374	India:	US\$ 478,808
Thailand:	US\$ 49,538	Switzerland:	US\$ 10,000
Brazil:	US\$ 61,690	Peru:	US\$ 8,000
Indonesia:	US\$ 20,475	Paraguay:	US\$ 7,843
Republic of Korea:	US\$ 153,621	<b>Total:</b>	<b>US\$ 2,238,617</b>
Macao:	US\$ 12,491		

(approx. JPY 250,000,000 at the exchange rate as of February 12, 2016)

### <Human Support>

#### 1) Operational support volunteers at Soka Gakkai centers that served as shelter

For operation of temporary shelter (Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Chiba prefectures)	approx. 12,500 people
Shelter for people who could not return home on March 11 (Tokyo)	approx. 100
<b>Total</b>	<b>approx. 12,600</b>

#### 2) Logistic support volunteers

Hokkaido (procurement, transportation, etc.)	approx. 700 people
Yamagata Prefecture (procurement, transportation, etc.)	approx. 400
Iwate Prefecture (procurement and transportation from inland areas, etc.)	approx. 240
Fukushima Prefecture (procurement and transportation from inland areas, etc.)	approx. 420
Aomori Prefecture (cooking, procurement and transportation, etc.)	approx. 110
Niigata (procurement, transportation, etc.)	approx. 2,200
Tokyo metropolitan area (procurement, transportation, etc.)	approx. 140
<b>Total:</b>	<b>approx. 4,210</b>

\*The above figures are total headcounts provided.

\*The figures do not include Soka Gakkai management and staff who participated in reconstruction operations conducted by the Soka Gakkai itself as a religious institution, nor Soka Gakkai's overseas members who participated in voluntary activities.

Soka Gakkai members of the affected areas participated in relief activities utilizing their strong ties with people of their respective local communities. Specifically, they undertook activities such as supplying emergency goods to various public shelters, cooperating with local administrations and private companies, supporting foreign residents in their areas, transmitting information regarding the goods in short supply, etc.

Soka Gakkai members who were doctors and nurses served as health consultants while lawyers, public accountants, tax accountants and other specialists gave free legal advices, and the group of hairdressers gave free haircuts, etc.

Support activities continue as recovery progresses.