

# ROAD TO RECOVERY

## Earthquake Updates by JWCU Japan Workers' Co-operative Union October 12, 2011

Over 7 months have past since the earthquake and tsunami.

Most of us in Japan seem to be getting back to our normal lives, but things are not quite the same. Now that the emergency phase is over, Tohoku region is facing the next step. Evacuation centers are closing, and unemployment insurance benefits are expiring. People in the affected areas are now expected to stand on their own feet, while the communities are not recovered. People in other parts of Japan are also fighting the fear of radiation.

Despite all the hardships, we are moving forward, thanks to your support and encouragement!

### From the Frontline

#### Vocational Training Projects Launched in Tohoku

While the emergency phase is over, rebuilding lives and communities remains a serious challenge. To create job opportunities for people in the quake-hit areas, JWCU has been commissioned by 4 municipalities in Tohoku to provide vocational training programs. What is unique about our program is that we not only provide training itself but also work with trainees to create actual jobs after graduation rather than waiting for someone to hire them.



Training participants in Tome City  
(Miyagi Prefecture)

Each program is for about 20 people who have lost their jobs due to the disaster. With emphases on care, food security and community, JWCU's 6-month training programs will consist of such contents as: how to create jobs, current conditions and challenges in the community, community assessment, training to become home care workers, field practicum, development of business plans, and the actual preparation to start a business. The first program started on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, and by the spring 2012, there will be new worker cooperatives in Tohoku that are started by the graduates to rebuild their own communities.

## Miracle Sunflowers in Fukushima

As we reported in our August issue, we have been working with farmers and NPOs in Fukushima to grow sunflowers, which were believed to cleanse the contaminated soil due to the nuclear plant accident. Although research showed no evidence that sunflowers cleanse soil, the beautiful flowers, which blossomed in August, healed people's soul in Fukushima. Local people called them "Miracle Sunflowers," saying that "It seems as if these flowers are cheering us up."



We are now taking seeds of the sunflowers to produce bio diesel fuel.

## Nationwide Support

### Soup Kitchen Project: the 10<sup>th</sup> Trip to Tohoku and We Will Keep Going

As reported in our June issue, our members in Kanagawa have been organizing a soup kitchen project in Ishinomaki City. In mid-September, they made the 10<sup>th</sup> trip, and they are beginning to build partnerships with people in the affected community.



This time, our members not only provided meals and supplies but also helped organizing a sport festival in the community, which brought 1,000 people together.

Our members are also beginning to understand the lives in the temporary housing as they deliver goods. Many residents do not know their new neighbors, and sometimes they have no one to speak with for all day. They are mostly older persons and live on \$500/month pension, and unlike the evacuation centers, they now have to pay for utilities and foods. Volunteers are also disappearing from the community. The biggest worry is that the housing will close in 2 years and they have no idea where to go after that. Many young people have already left the community, and older persons are left in the temporary housing. The winter is coming, and new needs will arise.

The next trip will be made in mid-November. The plan is to visit older persons in the temporary housing, delivering the goods for winter and listening to their needs.

## Parents' Plaza for Evacuees in Tokyo

Even after 7 months from the earthquake, there are thousands of people who still live as evacuees, and many are young parents with small children. Several municipalities open up their public workers' housing as their temporary houses, and Koto City in Tokyo is one of such municipalities.

In order to welcome these young families in the community, our members who operate an after-school program in the City organized "parents' plaza" at the public workers' housing.

The majority of the participants were from Fukushima, who were not used to urban lives. They said that they seldom go out but spend most of their time with their children alone in their temporary housing. It was also found that these parents did not know where parks are to let their children play.

Our members are now planning to start newsletters, blogs, and events so that these parents can get to know other parents in the community.



## Donation Report

**Thank You Very Much for Your Generous Support!**

As of September 30, 2011

**Total Donations: 110,690,274 yen**

**Total Spending: 18,999,651 yen**

Thanks to your generous support, JWCU has received 110,690, 274 yen (as of September 30, 2011), including the donations from global friends from Korea (Leftover Love Sharing Community) and via International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). We truly appreciate your kindness!

Your generous donations have been spent mainly on goods and supplies during the emergency phase, wage supplement for our members in affected communities during the emergency phase before restarting their businesses, and renting trucks for reconstruction work.

Reconstruction work takes a long time, and we are trying to raise 3 million yen to rebuild the affected communities and to create jobs there.



## Good Bye Nukes! JWCU Joined Rally & Petition

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 60,000 people gathered at Meiji Park in Tokyo to say “No” to nuclear energy, and about 100 JWCU members were part of this rally. We brought hand-made posters (please see the picture), calling for safer and more sustainable energy.

We are also collecting petition signatures, which will continue until next spring.

For more information on this campaign in English, please check the following web sites.

- “Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants” National Campaign Official Website in English:  
<http://sayonara-nukes.org/english/>
- Petition form and instruction in various languages:  
<http://sayonara-nukes.org/shomei/>

