

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Earthquake Updates by JWCU
Japan Workers' Co-operative Union
June 22, 2011

From the Frontline

This Is All That's Left: Harsh Reality Facing Our Members in Tohoku



Bihoro Hall in Onagawa City



This is where Ishinomaki Office used to stand

On April 27th and 28th, JWCU's newsletter staff visited Tohoku. Presidents of the member organizations took him and showed the damage on our members and the whole communities.

Bihoro Hall (see the left picture) in Onagawa City (Miyagi Prefecture), which used to be a community hub, is severely destroyed and unusable. Most of Bihoro's customers are also affected, and Bihoro is expecting 80% decline in its revenue. Nevertheless, Bihoro is already back at work. Since most of its cars were not damaged, the members have already restarted waste hauling services.

Ms. Kikuchi, the president of Ishinomaki Jigyodan, took him to where its office used to be. Since the area was damaged not only by the tsunami but a fire, the building was completely gone. Standing on top of the foundation, Ms. Kikuchi showed us something (see the right picture). "This is a blade of our lawn mower. This is all that's left." Fortunately, its day care center for the elderly was not damaged, and the members have already restarted the service.

Mr. Kajiwara, the president of Bihoro (see the left picture) states, "Our community is gone, but we are alive. If the city is not functioning, we should do something about it. We have no savings or income right now, but we need jobs to support our members' lives. And we need the support from our fellow cooperators."

The relief fund is used to support the lives of these members, to create jobs and to develop communities in these affected areas. Please see pages 3-4 for more details on the relief fund.

General Meeting of Representatives in Tohoku Region



On May 21st, 42 members gathered at a general meeting of Tohoku region representatives in Sendai, exchanging their experiences and plans for the future. For example, the members in Noda Village (Iwate Prefecture) have been offered home care jobs at temporary houses, while other members in Fukushima feel needs to create jobs for those who became unemployed due to the earthquake.

Please see page 5 of this newsletter for the plans to reconstruct the region.

Nationwide Support

Cooperation among Our Service Users: From One Generation to the Next



JWCU members provide various social services nationwide. One of them, a child support center in Sendai (Miyagi Prefecture) was severely hit by the earthquake and needed various supplies, including slings and dust clothes. Over 500km away, another group of JWCU members, who operates a small senior center in Toyama Prefecture, heard the story in Sendai and stood up with their service users, who were willing to offer help. “We are old, but we can support Tohoku by sewing!”

About 10 elderly people come to the senior center everyday, and almost everyone was hard at work on sewing. Finally, 4 slings and 100 dust clothes were sent from Toyama to Miyagi. The young parents in Sendai were touched not only by the supplies themselves but also by the caring gesture of “grandmas” miles away.



Soup Kitchen Project

Our members in Kanagawa (south of Tokyo), in collaboration with their partnering organizations, started a soup kitchen project in Ishinomaki City (Miyagi Prefecture).

At 9 p.m. on May 20th, 24 people, including JWCU members, civic volunteers, students and members of JWCU's partnering organizations, got on a bus and headed to Miyagi. They arrived in



Ishinomaki in the early morning of the 21st. They met with other volunteers from various places, and the total of 40 volunteers set up 2 soup kitchen sites near evacuation centers.

By late morning, the place was filled with 100 people lined up for the foods. By 2 p.m., the volunteers cooked fried noodles, rice balls, fried rice and others for about 500 people.

The volunteers packed their things again, got on a bus, and came back to Kanagawa at midnight on the 22nd. It was a busy trip, but the members are determined to go back. This project is not just about providing foods. This is where we see the reality of the affected area, learn the needs of people there, and build networks with local people. Our long term goal is to collaborate with local people and organization so that we can work together to create hubs for reconstruction.

The foods and equipments for this project were donated by local farmers, shops and a neighborhood association in Kanagawa area.

Relief Fund Updates

Leftovers Love Sharing Community (South Korea): Thank You for the Donation!

Leftovers Love Sharing Community in South Korea, which provides various supports for children, youth and the poor, has kindly donated 362,823 yen for the relief fund.

JWCU's partnership with Leftovers Love Sharing Community started in the fall of 2010, when our members visited their community youth center in South Korea. Their members visited us in February 2011 and gave very informative presentations on their project at our child care forum.

We look forward to strengthening further partnership!



How Are the Funds Used?

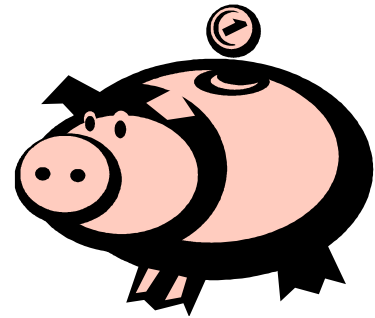
Thanks to the generous support from a number of people and organizations, **104,681,353 yen has been raised at JWCU relief fund (as of June 7th, 2011)**. The additional support is to arrive soon via ICA relief fund. We are truly grateful for your generosity!

So far, the money has been spent on salaries for the members in Onagawa and Ishinomaki, supplies that are needed in Tohoku, and renting trucks to deliver supplies to Tohoku.

For the future, our members need even more human, material and financial resources to restart their existing jobs as well as to create new jobs in order to reconstruct not only the organizations but also their communities.

Member organizations in the affected areas have submitted 2-year action plans with the budget, and funds will be used mainly (1) to support the lives of members, (2) to secure jobs for members, and (3) to reconstruct the communities where members live.

Please allow us to keep you updated on how the funds are used.



JWCU General Assembly (June 10-11, 2011)

Thank You for Your Messages!

JWCU General Assembly was held on June 10th and 11th, and thanks to your support, it was a big success. It was an opportunity for all the members not only to share the experiences and visions for the future (please see page 5 for details) but also to feel the warmest support from our global friends.

We have received more messages for the general assembly than ever, and we would like to express our deepest gratitude for the following organizations and people who kindly sent us messages. All of the messages were translated in Japanese, printed, and distributed to the participants.

<Thank You for Your Messages!>

(listed in alphabetical order of the organization or last name)

- Mr. Richard D. Arceno (Founding Chairman, Bigay Buhay Multipurpose Cooperative, Philippines)



- Mr. Ruben Villa Benayas (Director General, CES Soc. Coop. Madrid, Spain)
- Mr. Marcel Caballero (Honorary President, Institute of International Social Cooperation; Council Member, International Center of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy)
- Mr. Bob Cannell (UK Worker Cooperative Council, Cooperatives UK)
- Ms. Hazel Corcoran (Executive Director, Canadian Worker Cooperative Federation)
- Ms. Melissa Hoover (Executive Director, United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives)
- International Co-operative Alliance (Dame Pauline Green, President; Mr. Charles Gould, Director General)
- International Co-operative Alliance America (Mr. Manuel Mariño, Regional Director)
- International Co-operative Alliance Asia & Pacific (Dr. Chan Ho Choi, Regional Director)
- The International Organization of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers' Cooperatives (Mr. Bruno Roelants, Secretary General)
- Mr. Chul-Jong Lee (President, Korean Association of Social Economy Enterprises)
- Mr. Patrick Lenancker (President, CG SCOP, France)
- Ms. Felice Llamas (Focal Point on Cooperatives, United National Division for Social Policy and Development)
- Dr. Robert Marshall (Professor, Western Washington University, USA)

Vision for the Future

At the general assembly, several important plans were presented and approved, including:

- To set up Reconstruction Head Office in Sendai (Miyagi Prefecture);
- To establish 100 Community Welfare Centers in Tohoku Region, where people in the affected areas take initiative and play key roles in addressing the community needs and in reconstructing their own communities (This may become a model in which people can make the best use of the cooperative model to rebuild their communities);
- To raise 1 billion yen in 3 years to support the members and to reconstruct their communities; and
- To lobby for appropriate legal systems (including having the worker coop law approved) and public job assistance systems (including vocational training and creation of jobs that benefit communities) so that people have sufficient job opportunities which contribute to improvement of their communities.

