

# ROAD TO RECOVERY

Earthquake Updates by JWCU  
Japan Workers' Co-operative Union  
August 3, 2011

## From the Frontline

### Tohoku Reconstruction Head Office Is Ready to Go

An inaugural ceremony of Tohoku Reconstruction Head Office was held on July 15th to reassure our determination to rebuild the communities in the region.

7 members have been assigned to the Head Office, and about 10 additional members are expected to join the team. Ms. Yoko TANAKA, the director of the Head Office said, "I am sure that we can overcome this difficult time if



we join hands with people in the affected communities and bring together their wonderful power." After the ceremony, a reception was held. To show our solidarity with and support for Tohoku region, we used Tohoku products for all the foods and drinks.

### Supporting Local Farmers: Nuclear Accidents Cannot Stop Us!

In the wake of the nuclear power plant accident, farmers in surrounding areas have been suffering from declining sales because people are worried about nuclear contamination, even when the products are tested and found safe.

Even in Yaita City, about 120km southwest of the power plants, farmers are feeling the damage. In Yaita, our members operate a hot spring resort and farmers market, in collaboration with local farmers. While the farmers were facing the possible closure, our members felt their strong commitment and decided to keep the market open. With their hard work and strong wills, the farmers market is more vibrant than ever.



The store manager says, "These farmers used to know only about agricultural coops. Now they also know about worker coops. The worker coop is where we can bring our ideas, discuss them and do what is wanted by the community together, leading to a virtuous circle."

## Rapeseeds and Sunflowers to Cleanse Soil in Tohoku

In our May 17<sup>th</sup> issue, we introduced our “Nanohana (Rapeseeds) Project” which not only produces cooking oil and bio fuel but also has potential to clean up soil that is contaminated by the nuclear accident.

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, the bio fuel plant in Osaki City (Miyagi Prefecture) was officially launched as “Osaki Biomass Business Unit Agreen (meaning agriculture and green) Miyagi.” This plant is expected to produce 1,000 liters of bio fuel each day.

Moreover, JWCU members are also working with farmers and NPOs in Fukushima to grow sunflowers, which are also believed to cleanse soil. JWCU has built relationships with these farmers and NPOs through our previous projects, including National Gathering of Cooperation (held every 2 years) and a national vocational training program in farming.

Our plans are not only to produce bio fuel from sunflowers but also to provide opportunities to learn about radioactive materials.



## Nationwide Support

### Volunteer Beauticians in Tohoku: Building a Circle of Support

On June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 5 staff members of a hair salon in Tokyo “Hareke” visited JWCU member “Bihoro” in Onagawa City (Miyagi Prefecture) to provide free hair cut for 83 people in the community.

This initiative started when Hareke’s staff visited its local civic center, which has been working with us as members of “Voluntary Forum in Tokyo.” The civic center referred them to us, and our member contacted Bihoro because the first floor of its office building was a beauty parlor. The president of Bihoro welcomed the offer and distributed 600 flyers to people in the community, the elderly in particular who needed more support.



The president of Bihoro said, “We were thanked by the people in this community. These volunteers were also very nice. We hope we could keep our relationships.”

## Cooperation among Worker-Members: From South to North

In the southern end of Japan, over 1,000km away from Tohoku region, young members of JWCUCenter Jigyodan Kagoshima Area are standing up to grow rice and send it to Tohoku.

The project originally started as an initiative to build relationships between young people and the community, but its scope expanded to the relief effort to Tohoku.

One of the worker members offered to use his rice field (over 2,700m<sup>2</sup>), and the local farmers are willing to teach the farm work to the young people who have no experience.

They are planning not only to work on the field every other week but also to spend more time with local people through events and meetings. And of course, they are determined to send delicious rice to Tohoku in a few months.



## Hokkaido Worker Coop: Earmarking 1% of Reserve Fund for Relief Efforts

At Hokkaido Worker Coop general assembly on June 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, it was proposed that 1% of its Independent Reserve Fund in FY 2010 be earmarked for relief efforts to support Tohoku. In response to questions about the proposal, 3 members who attended JWCUCenter general assembly said, “We actually went to the affected areas and felt certain that our efforts helped the victims. We felt that we were tested whether our cooperation is real.” In the end, the proposal was approved unanimously.

## Global Support

### Thank You for Your Generous Support: Over \$500K Donated for Japanese Cooperatives from Global Cooperators via ICA’s Global Appeal

In the wake of this horrific disaster in March, International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) kindly launched a global Appeal to its members to support cooperatives in Japan.

In mid-July, the ICA President Dame Pauline Green visited Japan and handed over USD 540,000 donated by over 30 individuals and cooperatives around the world, which will be



distributed to various cooperative sectors in Japan.

We would like to thank ICA and fellow cooperators who have given us the generous support!

- ICA's press release with a list of donators:

[http://www.ica.coop/al-ica/attachments/PressreleaseJuly\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ica.coop/al-ica/attachments/PressreleaseJuly_2011.pdf)

## Good Bye Nukes! Call for Petition

Reconstruction of Tohoku region is impossible without efforts against nuclear energy issues. As one of our efforts for denuclearization, JWCU has joined a nationwide signature campaign for denuclearization, with a goal to collect over 10 million signatures by March 2012.

The campaign was launched to demand political leaders to change the policy direction so that nuclear power plants are brought to an end. The "Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants" rally will be held on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and 50,000 people are expected to be there.

We will appreciate if you could support this effort by signing and sending the petition.

- "Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants" National Campaign Official Website in English:

<http://sayonara-nukes.org/english/>

- Petition form and instruction in English:

[http://sayonara-nukes.heteml.jp/nn/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/0620sayonara\\_genpatu\\_E2.pdf](http://sayonara-nukes.heteml.jp/nn/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/0620sayonara_genpatu_E2.pdf)

