Hand-over of relief supplies for flood damage in Pakistan

Enhancing Emergency Relief Systems

Operations in Response to Requests from Affected Areas

JICA’s Disaster Relief Program dispatches Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) teams and provides emergency relief supplies when major disasters occur mainly in developing areas, in response to requests received from the governments of affected countries or international agencies.

Japan’s disaster relief activities date back to the late 1970s, when medical teams were dispatched to assist Cambodian refugees. In September 1987, the Japan Disaster Relief Team Law (the JDR Law) was enacted to enhance dispatch systems for rescue and expert teams. A partial revision of Japan International Cooperation Agency Law, which involves the addition of emergency relief supplies, led to the establishment of Japan’s comprehensive emergency disaster relief system.

The JDR Law was partially amended in June 1992, making it possible for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, after consultations with the director-general of the Defense Agency, to send teams from the Japanese Self-Defense Forces when large-scale aid is required in the wake of a large-scale disaster and self-sufficient activities are required in the disaster area.

JDR Activities

JICA’s Disaster Relief Program dispatches rescue teams, medical teams, expert teams, or Self-Defense Forces troops as personnel assistance and provides emergency supplies as material assistance.

1. Rescue Team

The main tasks of a rescue team are to search for missing people, rescue victims, provide first aid, and move victims to safety. The team is made up of rescue personnel of the National Police Agency, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, and the Japan Coast Guard. They leave Japan within 24 hours of a decision of dispatch in order to conduct search and rescue activities in an affected country.

2. Medical Team

The tasks of a medical team are to diagnose or to assist in the diagnosis of victims, and when necessary they work to prevent infection and the spread of diseases. Medical team
consists of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and medical coordinators registered with the JDR Secretariat of JICA.

Medical teams have taken over as the main dispatch units from their predecessors, the Japan Medical Team for Disaster Relief (JMTDR), which engaged in medical activities prior to the passage of the JDR Law. At the end of March, 2004, 702 members (221 doctors, 308 nurses, 24 pharmacists, and 149 medical coordinators) were registered under this scheme.

3. Expert Team

An expert team takes stopgap measures in the wake of disasters and provide guidance and advice on how best to achieve recovery. Teams consist of technicians and researchers recommended by related government ministries and agencies according to the type of disaster.

4. Self-Defense Forces

When a large-scale disaster occurs and the dispatch is deemed necessary, Self-Defense Forces can be dispatched. Self-Defense Forces carry out emergency relief activities (rescue activities, medical activities, stopgap measures, reconstruction), transport activities using ships, aircraft, and helicopters, medical and disease prevention activities, and water supply activities using water purifiers.

5. Provision of Materials

Emergency relief supplies such as blankets, tents, water purifiers, generators, and pharmaceutical products are provided to the affected country for relief purposes and to assist in the recovery process. To ensure that relief supplies are provided promptly and in large numbers, it is necessary for the supplies to be procured and stored securely. Warehouses are in place in three locations worldwide—Singapore, the UK, and the US—and the supplies are properly managed.

Large-scale disasters sometimes require additional relief supplies. In such cases, at the request of the affected country, JICA gathers supplies from local governments, private organizations, and individual citizens through mass media, etc. and delivers them to the disaster area. JICA itself bears all costs involved in the assembly of relief supplies in Japan and their delivery to the disaster area. These supplies are given to

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**Front Line**

**Dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief Medical Team for a Major Earthquake**

From Emergency Aid to Recovery and Reconstruction Assistance for the Bam Earthquake in Iran

**Working with the local people**

A major earthquake with a magnitude of 6.7 on the Richter Scale struck Bam City in Iran at 5:27 am, December 26, 2003 (local time). The death toll reached 20,000. The Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) medical team dispatched to the affected area examined and treated over 1,000 people during its six actual working days in spite of difficulties such as the delayed arrival of major medical equipment and supplies, and it being their first camp experience. The medical team was made of 23 members, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical coordinators, and logistic coordinators, when they arrived at the affected area. However, the activities of the team received a wide range of participation from more than 60 people, including Japanese embassy staff in Iran, Iranian interpreters, drivers, Iran National military troops who protected the camp site, and residents.

Among these was a boy who lost a relative in the earthquake but offered to help the medical team and was given a job to lead patients into the hospital. In addition, an Iranian doctor who was working as an interpreter offered medical assistance, and a driver helped as a receptionist for patients. All of the Japanese and Iranian people involved in the activities united under the goal of providing medical service for as many victims as possible.

These activities by the JDR medical team were highly regarded by the residents of the neighborhood and the number of patients who came to the Japanese team for help continued to increase. Iran’s Ministry of Health also acknowledged Japan’s successful achievement, and the hospital opened by Japan was taken over by a team of Iranian doctors as the Japan Medical Center to continue medical services for the residents of the neighborhood.

**Helping with recovery**

Recovery and reconstruction assistance following emergency aid is required at the affected site. In response, a study team was dispatched to survey local needs immediately after the withdrawal of the medical team. Emergency reconstruction plans were formulated for water supply, agriculture-related facilities, and the community, all of which were desperately needed in the affected area, Bam City, according to a survey conducted in April 2004. JICA will continue its support based on these plans in cooperation with Iran and other aid agencies to solve individual detailed problems in the future. Japan is planning to provide cooperation incorporating partial recovery of water supply facilities and agricultural facilities that were seriously damaged by the earthquake.

(Secretariat of JDR)
the recipient government through the Japanese embassy in the country.

Larger Aid Impact

Implementation of Seminar and Training

Overseas aid activities take place in countries that have customs and languages different from those in Japan. To ensure that relief activities in disaster areas are as efficient and effective as possible, JICA provides various seminar and training for rescue teams and medical teams. In fiscal 2003, joint training with training participants from overseas was introduced as a new activity for rescue teams.

Official Introduction of Evaluation

In line with the evaluation guidelines formulated in fiscal 2003, the rescue team and the medical team sent out to the Algerian Earthquake were evaluated. Based on the evaluation results, the team dispatch system was upgraded and enhanced. Evaluation guidelines for expert teams were also formulated.

Enhanced Alliance with International Organizations and NGOs

Usually, major countries’ aid agencies and international organizations provide relief support at the site of a large-scale disaster. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) takes the initiative to build a system for coordinating these disaster relief activities. In response, JICA is actively developing alliances with related organizations in order to contribute to the swift implementation of relief services at the disaster site.

In cooperation with Japanese NGOs operating in the affected areas according to circumstances of the area, we strive to implement more effective operations.

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Front Line

Training in Earthquake Disaster Prevention

Former Training Participants in Earthquakes Play an Active Role at the Disaster Area

Earthquake in developing country causes catastrophe

Memories of catastrophic earthquakes in Algeria and Iran are still fresh in our minds. In developing countries that have inadequate disaster prevention measures, disasters such as the collapse of buildings occur frequently, generating serious damage in the wake of an earthquake. Japan has implemented cooperation in this field for many years to transfer knowledge and experience related to earthquakes, as well as seismic technology to technicians in developing countries. In fiscal 2003, acceptance of technical training participants in the earthquake field marked its 40th anniversary, and a symposium commemorating this anniversary was held for the purpose of reviewing the history and the achievements of the training program. Also discussed were measures to improve the training program in light of the issues and needs of developing countries.

In cooperation with Japan Disaster Relief team

Currently, Tsukuba International Center runs two training courses on seismology and earthquake engineering in cooperation with the Building Research Institute: an earthquake and seismic engineering course and a global seismic observation course.

The earthquake and seismic engineering course is an 11-month training program. The first half of the course mainly provides lectures, practical training, and observations to transfer basic knowledge on seismology and earthquake engineering. In the latter half, individual training in the form of research according to country-specific issues is carried out. This training course is designed for young technicians and researchers in principle, with the aim of developing human resources with sufficient knowledge in the field of seismology and earthquake engineering. When the earthquake occurred in Algeria last year, former participants in this training course worked with the JDR expert team, leading to maximum achievement within a limited time.

The purpose of the global seismic observation course is to build a global network for nuclear test monitoring utilizing advanced seismic observation techniques in order to provide indirect support for realization of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. This course contributes to the development of human resources who will play an important role in the global seismic observation network in collaboration with the Preparatory Committee for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

(Tsukuba International Center)