

# Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake in the Four Years from March 2011

JICA has continuously supported the people and areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in the past four years, starting immediately after the disaster occurrence on March 11, 2011.

At the beginning, main activities of JICA's assistance focused on direct support to the victims including provision of shelters for evacuees, dispatch of JICA volunteers (Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs), ex-JOCV JICA personnel), coordination of international humanitarian organizations, and facilitation of NGO activities. After four years, JICA's current engagement centers around compiling lessons-learned from the recovery/reconstruction efforts and sharing them at various occasions including international conferences and seminars.

In the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, or Yolanda, which caused severe damage in the central Philippines on November 8-9, 2013, JICA took advantage of the working relations with quake-affected

areas of Tohoku and dispatched experts from Higashi matsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture, to provide hands-on advice to the affected communities in the Philippines based on their own experience of recovery/reconstruction from the Earthquake.

At the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, March 2015, JICA made substantive contributions to the discussions on Build Back Better Initiative, which aims at building disaster-resistant societies, based on the knowledge gained through JICA's experience of international cooperation on disaster management.

JICA will continue to engage actively in international disaster management based on the concept of Build Back Better Initiative, as well as tapping on Japan's own experience of recovery and reconstruction from large-scale disasters including the Great East Japan Earthquake.

## 1. Compilation of Knowledge on Recovery/Reconstruction

### (1) Study of Recovery/Reconstruction Processes from Large-Scale Disasters

The study examined recovery and reconstruction processes of past disasters in Japan, as well as those supported by JICA in developing countries, to identify ways and means to improve recovery/reconstruction support in developing countries.

### (2) Study of Support Approaches for Recovery/Reconstruction from Earthquakes

The study conducted case-studies of recovery/reconstruction processes in 16 areas of 3 prefectures which were severely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake to identify best-practices in community support activities in light of ensuring sustainable development and human security. The outcome of the study was presented at the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

## 2. Dissemination of Knowledge and Lessons-Learned

As a means to mainstream disaster management in development, JICA organized visits to and lectures in the quake-affected areas of Tohoku as part of its various training programs. By the end of fiscal 2014, as many as 3,085 people have been exposed to the reconstruction efforts taking place on the ground.

## 3. Promotion of Collaborative Reconstruction Initiatives with Local Governments in Quake-Affected Areas

As an effort to create opportunities of mutual-learning and benefit, JICA Partnership Program (JPP) projects were initiated and implemented by local governments in Tohoku region in partnership with counterpart organizations in disaster-stricken areas of developing countries.

In addition to on-going projects undertaken by Higashi matsushima, Kesenuma and Tagajo Cities of Miyagi Prefecture, new projects are being prepared by Sendai City (Miyagi Prefecture) and Ohfunato City (Iwate Prefecture), waiting for final approval.

A notable example is the case of Higashi matsushima City, which is implementing a JPP project in partnership with Banda Aceh City of Indonesia, who experienced severe damage caused by the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami of 2004. Both cities concluded a mutual cooperation memorandum in June 2014, after making repeated exchange of delegates from both sides.

## 4. Contribution to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

In order to share Japan's own experience of recovery/reconstruction effort after the Earthquake and JICA's support initiatives in Tohoku, JICA organized four public forums during the period of conference, under the concept of "Tohoku & the World (Tohoku is Tightly Connected to the World)," where various reconstruction experiences to realize sustainable society were introduced.

## 5. Promotion of Human Resource Development for Reconstruction of Disaster Affected Areas

JICA has been dispatching former JICA volunteers as the "Town Recovery Promoters" to Higashi matsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture since August 2011. A JICA staff member has also been seconded to the "Fukushima Future Center for Regional Revitalization" at Fukushima University.

Furthermore, since January 2013, as many as 111 former JICA volunteers have been dispatched (as of March 2015) to the quake-affected prefectures under the partnership agreement with the Reconstruction Agency and the Japan Overseas Cooperative Association.

With a view to disseminating experiences of collaboration between domestic and overseas local governments with similar situations and discussing innovative approaches of recovery/reconstruction, JICA organized a capacity building program in November 2014 for 70 local government personnel seconded to Tohoku region from non-affected prefectures of Japan in partnership with Miyagi Regional Bureau of Reconstruction Agency.

Finally, building on the findings gained from the "Study of Support Approaches for Recovery/Reconstruction from Earthquakes," JICA held a workshop titled "Reconstruction & Local Development & the World," on January 31, 2015, involving reconstruction supporters for the Great East Japan Earthquake and community development promoters, mainly consisting of former members of JOCV.