

## **FRIENDSHIPS FORGED THROUGH ADVERSITY**

**Mr Ian Scher, Chief Executive Officer & Founding Member, Rescue South Africa**

“How amazing to have been honoured with *The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette*, for humanitarian efforts! This accolade from Japan brought with it nostalgia for events in the wake of the Great East Earthquake which struck Japan in March 2011, a tragedy which also marked the start of a profound relationship between Rescue South Africa and JICA.

We were the first team from Africa to respond to this unprecedented crisis. The devastation in Japan was shocking, and after half a decade of Japan assisting Africa, it was time to return the favour in Japan’s hour of need. The operation was momentous.

It wasn’t easy for us to reach the point where we had to be for search-and-rescue operations, but absolutely worth it. Our timing was perfect as our arrival brought renewed motivation and energy to the team already there. Together, we were a formidable force. Even heavy snow couldn’t deter us from our duty. Realising the severity and urgency of the job, we adapted easily. What stood out for us, was the work ethic of the rescuers that we joined, with everyone exceeding 12-hour shifts searching for victims in the devastation around Sendai. Small gestures amidst this huge task became memorable, like the day one of the senior police officers sported a South African badge on his uniform. We fostered lasting friendships. At that tragic time, it was Rescue South Africa’s honour to serve, and it will remain the same alongside this friendship unshakeable by time and tide.

From this adversity, we joined hands with JICA in developing capacity for emergency services in Southern Africa. In fact, Rescue South Africa has been involved in numerous rescue operations in recent years, the latest in the aftermath of flooding in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in April 2022. I value relations with JICA and Japan at large, and I’ll continue with humanitarian efforts whenever needed, if possible.”

### **YouTube video links:**

Japan Mission – The Great Sendai Earthquake

<https://youtu.be/xavHsMeN26U>

Rescue South Africa – Disaster Response History

<https://youtu.be/QDSzFD7pR9E>





