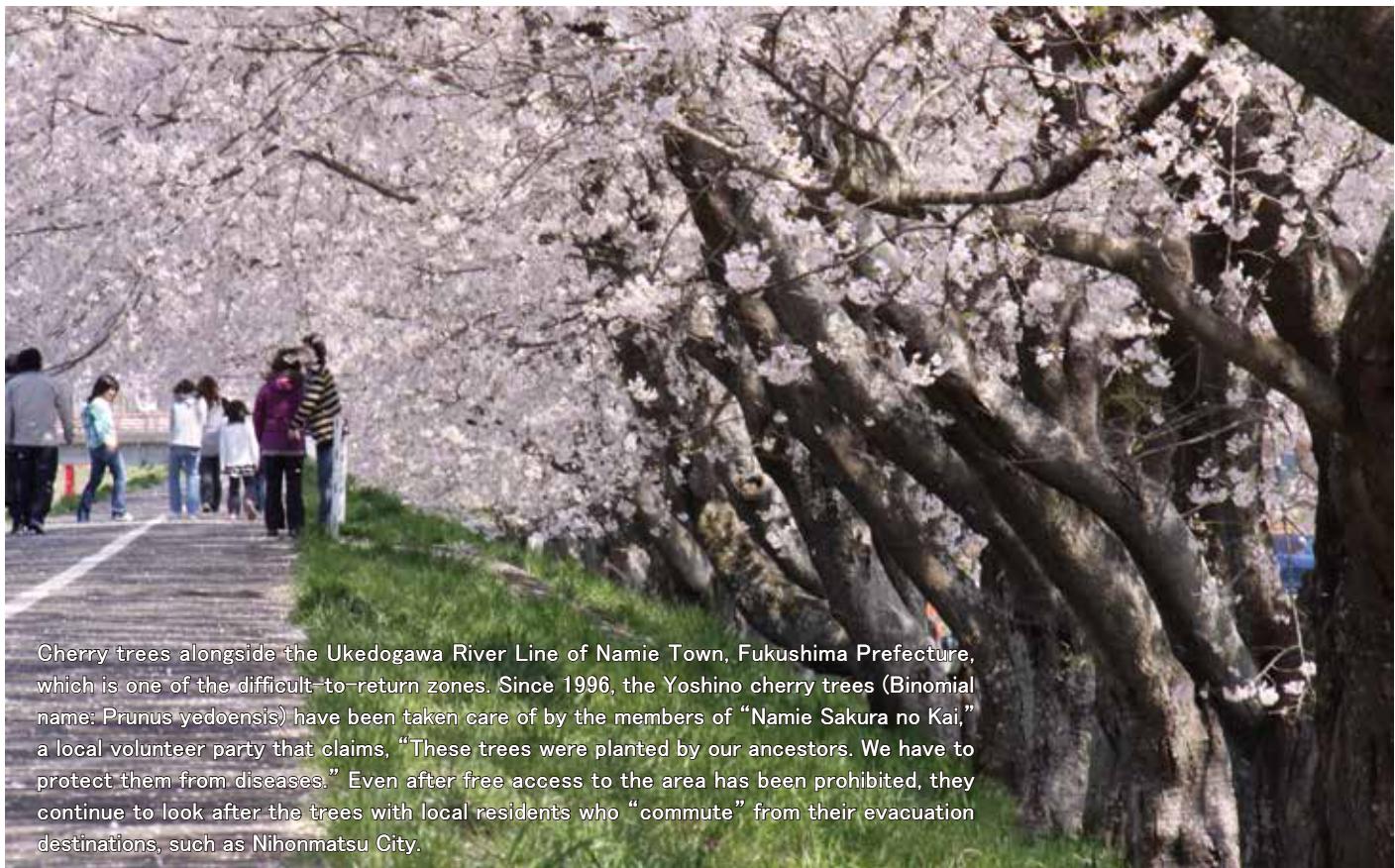




CIVIC FORCE

NEWS LETTER Vol.6



Cherry trees alongside the Ukedogawa River Line of Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture, which is one of the difficult-to-return zones. Since 1996, the Yoshino cherry trees (Binomial name: *Prunus yedoensis*) have been taken care of by the members of "Namie Sakura no Kai," a local volunteer party that claims, "These trees were planted by our ancestors. We have to protect them from diseases." Even after free access to the area has been prohibited, they continue to look after the trees with local residents who "commute" from their evacuation destinations, such as Nihonmatsu City.

Slow Progress in Reconstruction of Fukushima

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Five years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred and we are in our sixth year to further the initiatives for the reconstruction of disaster-affected areas. How have the disaster-affected areas changed and how much of the reconstruction has been completed? The number of earthquake evacuees throughout the country is 174,000. 49% of the construction of disaster recovery public housing units has been completed and 73 – 74% of farm fields and fishing ports have been restored (as of February 29, 2016, according to the Reconstruction Agency). Although various figures tell us the progress of the reconstruction, evacuees living away from their hometowns each have different thoughts.

One says, "Streetscapes are rapidly changing with elevations or restorations of lands swept away by the tsunami and reconstructions of new facilities and houses. I have hopes for the future, but I feel that the loss is greater." Another expresses a growing loneliness, saying "I feel grateful for my comfortable life in the disaster recovery public housing unit after moving from the small temporary housing. However, communication with neighbors has decreased." And still others look back saying "My only motivation to continue with my life was to do something to improve the situation." "I lost a lot, but I was able to get acquainted with various people after the disaster."

Meanwhile, reconstruction in Fukushima Prefecture, which was severely affected by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant of Tokyo Electric Power Company, is particularly slow compared to other disaster areas. The issues around radioactive waste management weigh heavily on people's futures, which leave them unable to foresee the goal of reconstruction.

In this issue of the Civic Force News Letter, we will report on the current situation of Fukushima where reconstruction has only made slow progress and deliver the voices of those living in disaster-affected areas. We will also report on the photography contest held by "Dream Support Project," a scholarship program for high school and university students of the three disaster-affected prefectures. Another topic we will introduce is the expansion of the activities of the "Asia Pacific Alliance (A-PAD)," which was established together with a disaster support NPO in Asia after the earthquake disaster.

Supporting Disaster-Affected Areas

Moving from “Concentrated Reconstruction Period” to “Reconstruction Revitalization”

In the affected areas, post-disaster reconstruction is underway including the development of residential lands and public housings for disaster recovery in preparation for moving residents to higher-elevated areas, and the recovery of public infrastructure.

On the fifth year since the disaster, the Government of Japan defined the next five years as the “Reconstruction Revitalization Period” following the “Concentrated Reconstruction Period,” which will end in March, 2016. It was announced that, in the next five years, the Government will aim not merely for a recovery but for a reconstruction that will lead local revitalization.

Meanwhile, the number of evacuees is more than 170 thousand people across Japan as of March, 2016, and those who became victims of “earthquake-related deaths” such as illnesses and fatigue occurred by life as evacuees, is estimated to be 2000 to 3000 or more. Until now, over 25 trillion yen of the National Budget has been allocated to the reconstruction projects mainly dealing with tangible things such as building coastal levees and moving to higher areas in the name of “safety first,” however, it is not easy to truly restore “relief.”

The progress made in reconstructing and revitalizing Fukushima Prefecture, in particular, has been slower than other prefectures. The nuclear power plant problem is making it hard for evacuees to “restart” their lives because situations and thoughts differ by each person. Some decided to go back at an early timing and others have been waiting for a long time or have already chosen

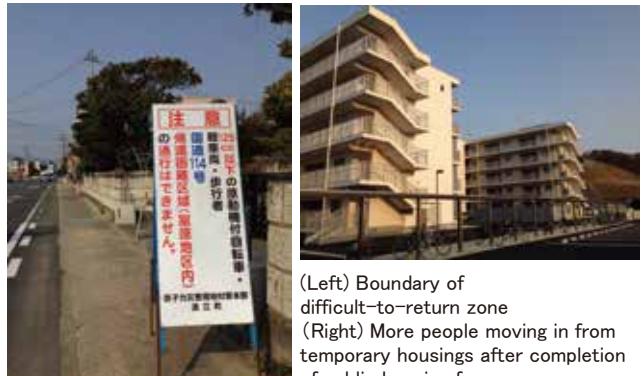


(Above left) Contaminated waste sitting in farmlands and schoolyards of difficult-to-return zones

(Above right) Development of levee underway at Onahama Coast, Iwaki City

(Below) A dried fish store restarted alongside the shore

The Great East Japan Earthquake



(Left) Boundary of difficult-to-return zone
(Right) More people moving in from temporary housings after completion of public housing for recovery

Contaminated Waste Filling Towns

The Government of Japan says it will continue to support the reconstruction of Fukushima even after the Reconstruction Revitalization Period ends in 2020. Recently, they decided to start the decontamination of the difficult-to-return zones from 2017. Located within the evacuation order zones designated after April, 2012, the relevant zones are areas where annual radiation doses are 50 millisieverts or higher and have been left totally untouched.

Seeing the decontamination underway together with the huge amounts of contaminated waste placed in sites that had been used as farmlands and schools, many of the former residents of Okuma, Futaba, and Tomioka towns of Fukushima Prefecture (towns located in the difficult-to-return zones near the nuclear power plant) say that they cannot choose to come back even if the radiation dose temporarily goes down. As they cannot foresee their future, they live feeling great uncertainty.

Supporting Evacuees Living Outside of Fukushima

The number of people who have evacuated from Fukushima Prefecture to other prefectures due to the aftermath of the nuclear plant incident amounts to 42,801 (according to Fukushima Prefecture, Feb., 2016). Whether the reason is the evacuation order being lifted, the children’s choices of schools, the progress of decontamination work, the infrastructure being restored, or the provision of temporary housings expiring in March, 2017; evacuees must make important decisions on ways to rebuild their lives such as going back to their hometowns, staying at their evacuation destinations, or moving to other places. However, it is difficult for those staying outside of Fukushima Prefecture to obtain enough materials in making such decisions and they are obliged to spend much time and effort collecting information. In response to the situation, Fukushima Prefecture will hold consultation and networking events at 20 locations from April, 2017, to support evacuees who need help.

Supports from local governments and understanding by neighbors of evacuation destinations are essential for evacuees from Fukushima Prefecture to live in peace. The situation of the nuclear plant is an important issue that should be addressed not only by the evacuees, but also by every Japanese person in the longer term.



Voice of evacuees in Fukushima

To make a real assistance to afflicted people who have been forced to live in a harsh environment by the sudden nuclear accident, not only a support in returning home but also in leaving away from home is necessary.

For Would-be settlers, Civic Force conducted “Jinseki-Kogen tour” in Jinseki-Kogen Town, Jinseki County in the northeastern part of Hiroshima Prefecture from 2014. The tour was mainly hosted by “nina Jinseki-Kogen,” a partner NPO of Civic Force, which is engaged in survey and support for relocation from Fukushima Prefecture and a revitalization project of Jinseki-Kogen Town. The tour .Jinseki-Kogen Town to the participants, showing its tourist attractions, hospitals, town offices, schools and other places, which conveyed the appeal of living in the town including support systems provided by the local authorities.



This tour project came to an end, but Civic Force stays connected with the participants. The following part features the latest messages from them who are living as evacuees in Fukushima.



Events hosted by nina Jinseki-Kogen, introducing the appeal of Jinseki-Kogen Town.

“I want to find a safe place to live” (Date City/male/in his 50s)

My family was forced to evacuate from Iitate Village due to the nuclear accident and has lived in a temporary housing complex in Fukushima Prefecture since August 2011. To protect my wife and children, I considered relocation to a place outside Fukushima which has lower radiation dose and participated in Jinseki-Kogen tour in the summer of 2015, but I haven’t made my mind yet.

Because of delayed evacuation orders after the accident, many residents in Iitate Village allowed their children to play outside without knowing the radiation dose was dangerously high. Now I deeply felt it regrettable that we didn’t receive evacuation orders shortly. I have measured radiation dose in the decontamination areas on my own because I can’t trust the figures announced by the government regarding the results of decontamination work. In fact, the doses I measure are higher than those released by the government.

My concern is that the evacuees might be forced to leave temporary housing complex to return home once the token decontamination program is finished. Although the decontamination program has spent hundreds of billions of yen of national taxes, it is not easy for us to return to the life with safety and security. This is obvious if you look at the Chernobyl accident and its aftermath. Safe place to live is the only thing we are asking for.

“Just to take a breather” (Iwaki City/female/in her 60s)

When the nuclear accident occurred, I lived in Okuma Town where the nuclear plant was located. I evacuated the town in a panic. Various information and rumors were circulating in Fukushima and I felt depressed being there. I thought of relocation and participated in Jinseki-Kogen tour. The scenery of some places in Jinseki-Kogen Town was similar to that of mountainous Fukushima, which inclined me to move in, but it isn’t easy to make a decision to leave where you were born and raised. However, a member of the staff of nina Jinseki-Kogen told me, “Why don’t you live here on a temporary basis just to take a breather?” That suggestion made me realize that I had another option, and I felt relieved.

For residents of difficult-to-return zones, compensation for psychological distress has been paid. Now I live in a place in Fukushima Prefecture where the level of radioactive contamination is relatively low. I moved out of a tiny temporary housing into a new house to start a new life, but my mind is restless by thinking about my little grandchildren, evacuees still living in the temporary housing complex, and the future of Fukushima. I’ve been helped by many people, and now I’d like to help somebody in return. I feel the desire be stronger and stronger.

The Great East Japan Earthquake

“Dream Support Photo Contest 2016”



Civic Force is holding “Dream Support Photo Contest 2016” in March 2016 as part of “Dream Support Project,” a support activity for the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The contest is intended for the current and former scholarship students of the Dream Support Fund. They are asked to post a picture with a message through SNS. Any theme is welcomed, such as “My Dream,” “What I Am into Now,” “The Present Situation of My Affected Hometown,” and so on. The best award winner will acquire domestic travel tickets, two excellent award winners receive Tokyo Disney Land tickets (pair), and all the participants be presented with 500 Yen worth of QUO Card.

The result of the contest will be informed directly to award winners and announced on the websites of Lawson, Civic Force and others.

Civic Force accepts donation for “Dream Support Fund” at Lawson



Dream Support Fund
Five years since 3.11.
“Dream Support Fund”
supports students affected
by the Great East Japan
Earthquake.
We are accepting your
contribution at the donation
box. Period: From Tue. March
1 to Thu. March 31

“Dream Support Project” which Civic Force launched in March 2013 will mark the fourth year in April 2016. It has supported 1,097 scholarship students so that they could continue their studies. Many of the supports can be made thanks to your donation.

Civic Force continues accepting donation for the scholarship students. Donation for “Dream Support Fund” is possible at the stores of Lawson group across the nation. We are extremely grateful for your continuous warm support.

We have some other ways to accept your support. “Online Donation” is available through the “donation/support” page on our Japanese website. You can also get a donation paid via our bank and post office accounts. Please check our website for details.

Posted at the Mainichi Shimbun

A contribution article by Kaori Neki, Executive Director of Civic Force, appeared on the 11th page of the “The Mainichi Shimbun” dated on March 10. Its title is “Enhance Cooperation among ‘Citizens’ in Disaster Response” .



What is “Dream Support Project” ?

“Dream Support Project” provides high school students in affected areas who are having difficulty to keep on attending their schools due to the earthquake worsening the economic condition, with monthly scholarship of 30,000 yen for up to seven years until they start working (until the end of March 2019). It is also implementing educational programs to support young people who hope to contribute to the reconstruction of Tohoku.

Supporting People Affected by Heavy Rain in Kanto and Tohoku Regions

Support for Salon Activities is Underway After Six Months from Disasters

Six months have passed since the heavy rainfall disasters occurred in Kanto and Tohoku regions in September, 2015. Civic Force quickly responded by dispatching a relief activity team immediately after the disasters and gave support to the nursing home for the aged that became isolated as well as to The NGO Collaboration Center for HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation (represented by Mr. Ryota Yorimasa), one of our partner organizations. This NGO group has been providing footbath services at evacuation shelters in Joso City, Ibaraki Prefecture. In November, we removed the debris drifted to farming areas and held a networking event at the evacuation shelter together with volunteers from Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Limited.

Around December of the same year, we provided a large tent free of charge to be used for gatherings. It was used to hold consultation events with lawyers and tax accountants for disaster victims and "salon activities (tea parties)," which were to create opportunities to keep close ties with each other for those leaving Joso City. We promoted interactions between sufferers by organizing the salon activities in response to their voices such as, "Very sad as we will no longer belong to the community" and "I would like to chat with my friends."

Footbath services regularly held at the evacuation shelter

Ms. Tomoko Masujima of The NGO Collaboration Center for HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation says, "There are many sufferers who are still forced to live in inconvenient circumstances because of the slow progress in rebuilding houses even after six months. They temporarily renovated parts of their disaster-affected houses and repaired the plumbing systems so they can at least sleep there, but more time and money will be necessary to further fix their houses for longer-term living. We would like to continue supporting the local people."

And, Mr. Yorimasa, the Representative, says, "Although the number of news reports on flood damages in Joso City has been declining, reconstruction has just started. As there are many people living in public housings away from their home land, volunteers who can support the recovery of local communities and provide psychological support



A house whose ground floor was once flooded and yet to be repaired

Relief activity team delivering goods to the nursing home for the aged that became isolated

"A-PAD Japan" Established in Saga

"Asia Pacific Alliance (A-PAD)" founded by disaster relief NGOs from five Asian countries including Civic Force launched its Japanese affiliate, "NPO A-PAD Japan" in Saga Prefecture and signed an agreement with the Saga prefectural government regarding their cooperation on February 2.

A-PAD Japan plans to establish a support system with some ideas such as utilizing the Saga airport as a transport hub for relief supplies at the time of large-scale disasters. Kensuke Onishi, chairperson of Civic Force, said at the signing ceremony, "In terms of an operation in the emergency situation that the Korean Peninsula or East Asia is destabilized, Saga is better than Tokyo from a geopolitical point and also has a well-equipped airport. We plan to charter a medium-sized transport aircraft and deliver relief supplies." At the same time, prefectoral governor Yoshinori Yamaguchi, who is actively working on attracting CSO (civil society organizations) to Saga, expressed his expectation for the partnership, saying that his government would support A-PAD Japan's emergency relief activities in the event of a disaster including the use of Saga Airport.



Prefectural governor Yamaguchi (left) at the signing ceremony

A-PAD Philippines Founded

"A-PAD Philippines" was established in Manila, the Philippines capital city on March 3. It works as a national platform where a multi-sectoral alliance of Philippine companies, NGOs, and the government collaborate with one another for the disaster response.

A-PAD has concluded mutual cooperation agreements with 22 organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Rotary Club and educational institutions in the Philippines. Taking this opportunity, we will further strengthen the cooperation between the sectors and promote more efficient and effective disaster response in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, Bicol region in Luzon island, Visayas and Mindanao region.



Executive director of the Philippines National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) also attended the foundation forum.

Symposium Held in Indonesia



A-PAD held an international symposium regarding public-private partnership in disaster relief assistance in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital city on January 19 with about 100 people taking part in. The participants shared the knowledge and experience of each country and also made a discussion about effective cooperation among different sectors in Indonesia from a variety of perspectives.

※ This project is organized with some financial assistances including "Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects" by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Search and Rescue Operation in Southern Taiwan Earthquake Completed

As an emergency support to southern Taiwan earthquake that occurred in the early morning of February 6, A-PAD continued to search for the missing, providing its search and rescue team led by Taiwan resident staff with material and equipment for their activities. The search operation ended on March 13. We would like to renew the expression of our thanks to everyone who has given their warm supports to the operation.



Searching at collapsed buildings

Onishi talked at Fundraising Japan's Events

Japan Fundraising Association hosted Fundraising Japan 2016, the biggest fundraising conference in Asia, on March 12 and 13, 2016 in Tokyo. The chairperson of Civic force, Mr. Kensuke Onishi, talked at two of the sessions in the conference. Fundraising Japan was started in 2010 for the purpose of making the donation culture take root in Japan, introducing the know-hows of fundraising and the latest activities by NPO/NGOs which have been working actively both in Japan and overseas. The event saw about 1300 people participate this time.

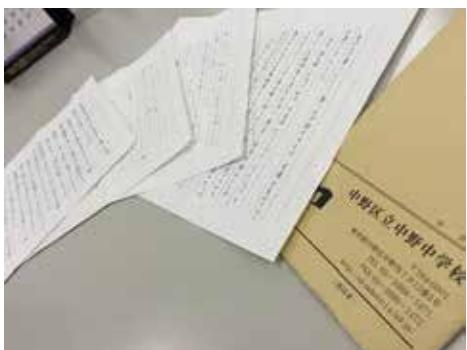
On March 12, Mr. Onishi talked at a session titled "From Saga Pref. The First Attempt in Japan to Attract CSO to Rural Areas with the Hometown Tax Scheme and Other Fundraising: Regional Revitalization by Using the Joint Fundraising with the Government", followed by joining in an intensive talk session "Designing the Flow of Money in Society: 'A Reading of the Future' by the Leading Professionals in Japan" on 13. The speakers deepened the discussion on fundraising through exchanging their experiences and ideas.



Mr. Onishi (the second left) talked at two of the sessions.

Letters from Nakano Junior High School students

Four students at the second grade of Nakano Junior High School (Nakano ward) visited our office at the beginning of February in a process of a survey titled "Research on Volunteers and Social Contribution Activities" which was conducted in their integrated study class. We explained the Civic Force's domestic and international activities to them.



Letters sent from the students afterwards.

Start Your Support with Only 33 Yen per Day

In order to be prepared for future disasters, we need your support. Become a monthly supporter and you can donate a fixed amount each month (in 1,000 yen units) and help prepare for future large-scale disasters.

Payments can be made through bank transfers to Civic Force:

■ Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation:
Aoyama Branch Account No. 6953964

■ Japan Postal Bank:
Account No. 00140-6-361805
Account holder's name of the above banks is "Civic Force"

■ Credit card:
Please check the "Donate Now!" section of the Civic Force website below
https://bokinchan2.com/civicforce/donation/bokin/page1.php?bokin_type=donation

*You can read back issues of our monthly reports and News Letter on the following website:
<http://civic-force.org/news/newsletter/>

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