



CIVIC FORCE

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Fish market of Kesenuma City in Miyagi Prefecture is one of the major landing ports for seafood caught in the offshore of the Sanriku Coast. It was extensively damaged by the earthquake, but resumed its operations in June 2011. The photo shows swordfish landed in December 2015.

Reconstruction of Disaster-affected Areas and the Changing Streetscapes

Buildings under construction being dispersed across disaster-affected areas, large trucks that frequently come and go, and the embankments towering along the coast—the fifth New Year will come to the areas that were affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, and are now undergoing rapid changes.

Fiscal year 2015 is the final year of what the Reconstruction Agency designated as the “intensive reconstruction period.” Based on the learnings from the earthquake, the affected areas aiming to “develop disaster-resilient towns” are in progress for land forming, collective relocation, and construction of disaster recovery public housing units. In the northern areas of Miyagi Prefecture such as Kesenuma City where Civic Force has been involved in the recovery activities, reconstruction has begun reflecting the features of the mountainous Sanriku ria coast area. The new communities are designed to relocate residents to areas of higher elevation and to separate residential areas from workplaces. Some who have finished raising the ground level and forming the land have already started their lives at their new houses on the hill. Meanwhile, new issues have become evident: some people still have no choice but to live in temporary housings and some communities created after the disaster have fallen apart.

In this issue of the Civic Force News Letter, we interviewed the NPO partners and the local governments of the affected areas that have been participating in the NPO Partner Projects and the Mid- to Long-Term Reconstruction Project of Civic Force to ask them about the state of their recent activities, the conditions of the towns and so forth. We will also report on the progress of support activities provided to victims of the heavy rainfall disasters in Kanto and Tohoku areas and to people in Asia.

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Supporting Disaster-Affected Areas

The following articles describe the aid activities Civic Force continues to execute since March 11, 2011, in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, as well as its emergency response activities for disasters that occur in various regions of Japan.

The Great East Japan Earthquake

Civic Force has conducted emergency response activities such as procuring/distributing relief goods, putting large car ferries into service, and sending employee volunteers since the outbreak of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The organization has also been engaged in urban restoration activities in areas including Kesennuma City, Miyagi prefecture to support restoration and reconstruction. Followings are the voices of people who have worked together with us in the “NPO Partner Projects” and the “Mid- to Long-Term Reconstruction Project” and are still making contributions to activities for the reconstruction of the Tohoku region.



Mr. Shoichi Shirahata
Chairperson, Kesennuma Oshima Tourism & Convention Bureau
President, Oshima Kisen Co., Ltd.

Creating an attractive island where everyone would want to come back to

Oshima is the largest manned remote island of the Tohoku region, which is a 20-minute ferry ride from the mainland embraced by beautiful nature of Odanohama beach and Kameyama. I was born and raised on this island and have been engaged in this island's tourism for more than 40 years. Although it was damaged by tsunami and fires caused by the Earthquake, volunteers from all over Japan helped us by continued activities such as removing debris and cleaning. My loss was great but the ties with these volunteers have become my treasures.

Nearly five years have passed since the earthquake and people are losing interests in reconstruction nor are they as alert to disasters as they were. Neither has the number of tourists to the island returned to the level before the disaster. The momentum of reconstruction increased soon after the earthquake but now things have slowed down. It may be natural for young people to leave home to seek jobs, especially if they become anxious after learning about plans (e.g. seawall construction) that could cause a major change in the future of their hometown. The “Oshima Bridge,” which will connect the mainland (Kesennuma) and Oshima, is planned for completion in 2018 and will most likely change the circumstances surrounding the island. However, I will work hard to make our island attractive, so everyone would want to come back.



Mr. Hidenori Hoshi
Directing Manager, Association to Promote the Collective Relocation Project for Disaster Prevention in Osawa

Making a community to pass on to children

Nearly 80% of the houses suffered damage from the disaster in Osawa district of Karakuwa Town, Kesennuma City where 186 households were living but this was when the local volunteers established the Association to Promote the Collective Relocation Project. Amid most of Osawa district designated as the “Disaster Risk Area” and most residents had to find a new place to move into, the association set a goal that could “bring everyone home.” They held meetings to study about moving to higher elevations and submitted proposals to the local government, which led to the agreement from the minister in May 2012, stating the collective relocation for 100 households.

“Kesennuma Future Plan Osawa Team” composed of universities and “Osawa Mirai Shukai (meetings for the future of Osawa)” held by the support of Civic Force both have remained active and met regularly even after land preparation and groundwork began. “Relocation” started in August 2015, and 80% of the people are now living in new places, but we still want to continue operating the “Osawa Kaeru Kyoshitsu,” the place people and/or children have been assembling as a site for the elderly and children to gather. We want to make the Osawa district a place for children who grew up here but left to live elsewhere want to come back someday.



Oshima x Civic Force

Civic Force mediated a lease contract to rent a car ferry free-of-charge for 11 months from April 2011. The car ferry was used as a means of relief supplies and construction vehicles, and helping islanders commute.

Community Development x Civic Force

Civic Force provided financial aid, sent experts and published books to support Osawa district of Karakuwa Town and Koizumi district of Motoyoshi Town, both in Kesennuma City, in order for them to strengthen community ties before relocating and to accomplish urban restoration driven mainly by local residents.



Supporting Disaster Affected Areas

The Great East Japan Earthquake



Mr. Ken Sato
Chairperson, NPO Peace Jam

Importance of place where local residents, parents and children can spontaneously gather

In the disaster hit areas, we have been told by mothers of small children about their difficulties, such as “We can’t find a job,” or “We are losing chance to go out because of the lack of nursery due to the earthquake.” Their problems were revealed through our activities to deliver milk and diapers to babies. To provide job opportunities for the mothers to work again while raising their children, we started a project of manufacturing and selling jam and sundry goods. Now, ten mothers are working in the workshop which were opened in 2014 and are furnished with a kids’ room and a nursing room. In September 2015, a park was created in front of the workshop, and also a café was pre-opened.

In many cases, the victims were forced to move from refuge to temporary housing and further to public housing in a short period after the earthquake. It made breakup of the local communities. Under the circumstance mothers feel lonely easily. But if they have a place where they can raise their children with having fun through working with other mothers, it can lead to children’s smile which will get the local communities lively. So we will seek the expansion of market of our goods with targeting to export them overseas. Also, we would like to start growing vegetables with local elderly people and children.



Support for Mothers x Civic Force

In 2012, Civic Force started a support for the startup of Peace Jam and provided financial aid for their business including manufacturing cost and salary. Since 2014, Civic Force has dispatched management advisors to Peace Jam to help them set up a sustainable operating system.



Mr. Makoto Hatakeyama
Director, NPO “Mori wa Umi no Koibito
(The forest is longing for the sea, the sea is longing for the forest)”

Introduction of connectivity of hills, humans and oceans to world

At Moune Bay, Karakuwa Town in Kesenuma City, we act for the three areas: environmental education, forestry and protection of nature environment. In spite of the severe damage by the earthquake, we conducted natural environment research in collaboration with researchers, NPOs and corporations and broadly disclosed the result to fishermen and other stakeholders, for the rebuild of the town which can utilize natural environment. Also, the plantation festival which we started in 1989 was regularly held even after the earthquake. And “Moune Institute for Mori-Sato-Umi Studies” was opened. As a result, we have developed environmental education in Negros Island, Philippines since 2014 to actively promote the idea of “Mori wa Umi no Koibito (The forest is longing for the sea, the sea is longing for the forest)” overseas.

These actions were broadly introduced at the 1st study group of Ministry of the Environment’s project “Tsunageyou, Sasaeyou Mori Sato Kawa Umi (Let’s link and support Hills, Humans, Rivers and Oceans.)” and other lectures across Japan. In the future, making “Connectivity of Hills, Humans and Oceans” the theme, we would like to deliver the way of life together with nature to more people. What we lost due to the earthquake is so huge. But the connection between nature and people which we discovered through the experience of the earthquake is invaluable. With putting together the results we have achieved so far in a program, we would like to make the most of them to revitalize our community.

Environment x Civic Force

Civic Force provided continuous operational support for “Mori wa Umi no Koibito” such as holding symposiums to introduce the results of environmental research and carrying out monitoring tours. Also, Civic Force has asked them for cooperation to accept students from an outdoor education program of “Dream Support Project.”





Mr. Hirotaka Oba
Chairperson, NPO Shinrin

I would like more people get connected with mountains

I was born and raised in mountainous Kurihara City, Miyagi Prefecture and founded “Japan Forest Biomass Network” in 2009 with the concept of realizing sustainable community in Japan. This came from my hope to change the reality of Japan’s forestry, which speeded up overseas deforestation for less cost and the negligence of domestic mountains in Japan. After the Great East Japan Earthquake, we founded “Shinrin” with the cooperation of Civic Force and organized “Kikori or lumberjack courses” to teach and learn how to take care of mountains on our own. Currently we have launched Itakura Meister 2 Day Course (series of 3 sessions to complete in 6 days) where you can learn traditional Japanese construction method. We actually build 9.9 square meters huts using lumbers cut down by chainsaws and convey the linkage from the mountains to the actual houses.

Furthermore, “House of Sunshine in Your Hand” was established utilizing natural energy, for families and children in Fukushima to have a place to come and rest. This place has been serving many parents and children so far. We also plan to have local residents use this place as a café in the future.

Natural Energy x Civic Force

After the quake disaster, local production of energy for local consumption effort has been valued. Civic Force has supported Shinrin, which focuses on training people in forestry and also promotes biomass fuel, and Kesennuma Regional Energy Development Company.



Mr. Minoru Ueyama
Chairperson, nina Jinseki-Kogen

One of the options for those who are in Fukushima for relocation

We are based in Hiroshima and we have been supporting and researching Would-be evacuees and settlers from Fukushima. Since 2013, we have organized “Jinseki-Kogen tour” several times a year for Would-be settlers as part of NPO Partner Projects of Civic Force. Accentuating the feature of Jinseki-Kogen, we have introduced the prosperity of living in Jinseki-Kogen Town and our efforts to revitalize the place. We did a guiding tour of tourist attraction places, hospitals, town offices, schools, local companies and housings. We also participated in the relocation information meeting which was held in Fukushima and provided necessary information as one of the relocation alternative. We conducted a survey among them about the damages from nuclear plants, the effects from radiation and their basic requirements for relocation. Some of the families who are more connected with us are seriously considering settling in Jinseki-Kogen Town. Hiroshima is far from Fukushima and it is not easy to make a decision to leave where you were born and raised. We hope the families can make the best decision for their future.

Fukushima x Civic Force



NPO Partner Projects have ended in September 2015, while nina Jinseki-Kogen has continued supporting parents and children who have moved for evacuation and providing information to those who are still in agony about relocation.

ARH: Track Record of Medical Transportation in Kesennuma Region – 36 cases

“Wing for Life Project: Emergency Medical Helicopter Transportation Support” has launched in June 2013 as reconstruction support toward the Great East Japan Earthquake. It operates helicopters to transport emergency patients mainly from Kesennuma region to adjacent advanced medical facilities and it has transported 36 times up to date. Everyday we were reminded of the importance of this mission and the expectations from the people, as transferring patients to advanced medical facilities and the shortage of doctors had always been serious issues in the Kesennuma region and this situation was worsened after the earthquake disaster.

On the other hand, we have decided to temporarily stop this service as of the end of November 2015, due to the lack of securing funds. We like to apologize everyone who supported us from local areas, related institutions and the whole nation as well as express our great appreciation to the past support and cooperation.

However, All Round Helicopter will continue its activity to contribute for disaster response and emergency medical care by utilizing helicopters. It will be strengthening its organizational foundation and trying to restart this project in this region.

Takahashi Masayuki, Chairperson, Specified Nonprofit Corporation All Round Helicopter

Supporting People Affected by Heavy Rain in Kanto and Tohoku Regions

Mr. Okada and Coca-Cola Employees Volunteer for Trash Pickup

Approximately 120 people including Coca-Cola employees and a former Japanese national football team head coach, Takeshi Okada, who currently owns FC Imabari, joined together to clean up debris as volunteers on November 25. This was coordinated by The NGO Collaboration Center of HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation and Civic Force.

The volunteers picked iron pipes, pieces of wood, empty cans and bottles out of the overflowed mud by hand, and collected about 1.5 tons of debris and trash. The cleanup activity was carried out on a farmland of 2 hectares in Joso City, Ibaragi Prefecture. A local farmer, Tomoaki Ishizuka said, "Farmers in Joso City did not have enough manpower for cleanups and were concerned about crops for the following year since most of them were elderly or part-time farmers. We really appreciate for many people coming to help us."

Mr. Okada spoke to 116 people at an evacuation center and said, "You all are going through a really difficult time, but please don't forget that a lot of people are willing to help you."



Volunteer workers who picked up tons of debris at the cleanup activity

Footbath by The NGO Collaboration Center for HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation

In Joso City, Ibaragi Prefecture, Civic Force supported the partner organization, The NGO Collaboration Center for HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation assisting disasters like the Great East Japan Earthquake along with emergency rescue activities. Footbath service was provided for 270 people at an evacuation center with students and local volunteers. It was held until the shelter was closed on November 2015.



Footbath service was provided regularly at evacuation centers or assembly halls.

Coordinating student volunteers

Volunteer activity was coordinated with 40 students from Tokiwa University and Tokiwa Junior College and it took place in Joso City on October 26 and 31, which were coordinated by The NGO Collaboration Center for HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation and Civic Force.

The students scooped mud out of canals, picked up scattered straws, played with children and talked with local people.



Scooping mud out of a canal(Left) and interactions with children at an evacuation center.

Appreciation and Report for the Donations to Heavy Rain Victims in Kanto and Tohoku Region

Civic Force collected donation for Heavy Rain Victims in the Kanto and Tohoku Regions started on September 10 and by November 11, they had collected a total of JPY 4,415,545. The donations were used to emergency-relief activities shortly after the disaster and also to support activities provided by The NGO Collaboration Center for HANSHIN QUAKE Rehabilitation for launching volunteer centers, cleanup and a foot bath service.

Civic Force appreciates your kind support.

“A-PAD Korea” Inaugurated in South Korea

Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management (A-PAD) hosted two symposiums in Seoul: “HOW TO SAVE LIVES: The Cooperation beyond borders and sectors” (sponsored by Sasakawa Peace Foundation) on October 22, and “International Symposium on Disaster Management in the Asia Pacific Region” (co-hosted by National Diet Social Contribution Forum) on the following day.

On October 22, the inauguration of “Korean National Platform,” which is a mechanism to enhance cooperation among the NGO, business, and public sectors, was declared. The speakers of the symposium included Mr. Young-Jin Park, the Chairman of Korean National Platform, Mr. Kensuke Onishi, the President of A-PAD, and Ms. Junko Chano, the Executive Director of Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Ms. Chano has supported A-PAD since it was just a blueprint. They articulated the history of A-PAD and emphasized its roles in disaster management.

At the event held on October 23, Diet members from Japan and Korea gave their speeches. Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki, the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, mentioned that “it is necessary to build relationships among diet members from different countries to enable an effective mutual cooperation in disaster management” and declared the inauguration of “Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum for Disaster Management.” The attendees of the roundtable included Mr. Shunsuke Mutai and Mr. Masatoshi Akimoto, members of the House of Representatives, and Mr. Kohjiro Takano, a member of the House of Councilors.



Inauguration of Parliamentary Forum was declared (top) Mr. Shiozaki calls for cooperation of lawmakers (left)

A-PAD Hosted International Symposium in Sri Lanka



A-PAD hosted an international symposium titled “Public-Private Partnership Towards Disaster Resilience and Sustainable Development” on October 5 in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

From seven Asian countries including Sri Lanka, as well as from Colombo, and the north, east, and south regions of Sri Lanka, about 180 participants from NGO, business sectors, and administrative offices attended the symposium, discussing how to share and utilize knowledge and experience of each country. The symposium attracted attentions in Sri Lanka, as four major national newspapers reported about it.

Temporary Classrooms Completed, Providing Places for Children to Study

In response to Nepal earthquake, A-PAD has implemented a support project to build temporary classrooms in Ramechhap District which is about 170 km or four-hour drive to the southeast from the capital of Kathmandu. In cooperation with Institution for Suitable Actions for Prosperity (ISAP), A-PAD is in the process of the support project of demolishing three damaged buildings at Bhumesthan Lower Secondary School (equivalent to junior high school in Japan) and constructing temporary classrooms on the site of this lower secondary school and two other neighboring schools. In November 2015, two school buildings and temporary classrooms were completed, offering an environment to study in new classrooms to children who had been forced to study outside. By the end of December 2015, all of the construction works of the temporary classrooms will be finished.



Nepalese children studying in the temporary classroom

Creating an Emergency Preparedness Mechanism

We are taking various measures to strengthen our emergency preparedness mechanism. This page introduces the support given by our partners, such as magazines that published articles about activities conducted by Civic Force.

Emergency Preparedness Mechanism

Participated in Drill of Large-scale Overseas Disaster

Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management (A-PAD) participated in a drill under the assumption of providing emergency relief in the event of a large-scale overseas disaster. In addition to the Japan Self Defense Force, about 20 people from the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the US military, and NGO attended the drill held in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture. Assuming that an earthquake occurred in the offshore of Sumatra of Indonesia and the tsunami struck the coastal area causing a severe damage, attendees simulated “cluster meetings” which are held to coordinate support on site.

A-PAD participated in the mock cluster meeting related to logistics (procurement and supply of goods) chaired by WFP on the assumption that they are in charge of distribution of relief goods at refugee camps. A-PAD is working to form partnership with relevant organizations and support as many disaster victims as possible.



Information shared by each organization at cluster meeting

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The United People Fund’s “Single-click donation” was closed at the end of March 2015.

Thank you for your long-standing support !

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:

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