

The Nippon Foundation
“Persons with Disabilities and Recovery Support, and Disaster Reduction”

In time of disaster, the mortality rate for persons with disabilities is higher than for persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities also face difficulties at evacuation centers and in temporary housing. According to a survey conducted after the Great East Japan Earthquake, fatalities among persons with disabilities were double that of persons without disabilities. This highlights the reality that existing measures such as welfare shelters and lists of persons in need of aid failed to function effectively.

In addressing reconstruction assistance immediately after the disaster, the Nippon Foundation focused on providing detailed support for persons with disabilities and others requiring care.

In addition, by sharing lessons learned with organizations both at home and abroad, the Nippon Foundation is able to propose approaches to care for persons with disabilities and measures for disaster reduction to help better prepare for future disaster.

Recovery support and disaster reduction projects related to persons with disabilities

1) Interviews regarding special needs at individual evacuation centers

Immediately after the disaster, the Nippon Foundation launched its Joint Support Project - Linking Disaster-affected People with NPOs (Tsunu-Puro). Between the time the disaster hit and June of that year, Nippon Foundation representatives visited 443 shelters and identified over 500 needs. Those needs were posted on the website using a cloud computing system made available by a private company and updated weekly in order to communicate the ever-changing needs of the affected areas to society. In the process, the special needs of women, the elderly, and children and adults with disabilities were identified and the required materials and equipment such as wheelchairs and portable toilets were delivered.

2) Developing a manual for evacuation center management (bases for the provision of support for individuals affected by the disaster) and implementing training for better preparedness against future disaster

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, as high as 30% of certified earthquake-related fatalities lost their lives during refuge life. In order to reduce post-evacuation deaths, which conventional training aimed at evacuation alone fails to address, the Nippon Foundation conducts evacuation center management training based on knowledge about special needs acquired through “Tsunu-Puro,” in cooperation with local authorities, organizations and private companies, activity to ensure safe refuge for women, the elderly, and children and adults with disabilities.

3) Donating welfare vehicles to facilities in the disaster area

In April of that year, used welfare vehicles which had originally been scheduled for transport to Peru were donated to the welfare facilities that had lost vehicles in the tsunami. A total of six vehicles for wheelchair/transportation service were provided to a welfare organization working in Rikuzentakata City, Iwate prefecture, and Ishinomaki City, Miyagi prefecture.

Since then, we have offered assistance to welfare facilities for the purchase of vehicles to facilitate the transportation of persons with disabilities. For example, we sent used vehicles to 12 welfare-related organizations. This was made possible by a generous donation by Gulliver International Co., Ltd.

4) Support for temporary housing for disaster-affected persons with disabilities

- Temporary housing with residential care for disaster-affected persons with disabilities (Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture)

The Nippon Foundation provided support for the establishment of “The Nippon Foundation Home, Oguni no Sato,” (operated by the Ishinomaki Shoshin-kai in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, a social welfare corporation which operates temporary housing), temporary housing with residential care specializing in persons with disabilities, with the goal of offering a place that would allow persons with disabilities and their families to avoid feeling uneasy among other families without disabled members. It opened in June, 2011, with 150 residents, including family members. The facility has a barrier-free design, including a slope and handrails at the entrance. Sound insulation walls buffer noise from adjacent rooms. Four members of the “Ishinomaki Shoshin-kai” staff stand by to provide various support and consultation. At present, staff continues to provide self-reliant support for the smooth transition to public restoration and other regular housing.

- Support for an apartment building for persons with intellectual disabilities who were evacuated following the nuclear accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plants (Tamura City, Fukushima Prefecture)

We provided support for the establishment of “The Nippon Foundation Home Toyo Ikusei-en” (operated by Fukushima Prefecture Welfare Service Association in Funehiki-machi, Tamura City, Fukushima Prefecture), housing for persons with intellectual disabilities who had evacuated to Kamogawa City, Chiba Prefecture from Tomioka-machi, Futaba-gun, Fukushima Prefecture. The facility opened in March 2012 with 50 residents. The staff provides continuous support to help persons with intellectual disabilities get used to this new living environment through local volunteer activities such as cherry-blossom viewing and other events.

5) Sending sign language interpreters and social workers

In cooperation with Japanese Federation of the Deaf, sign language interpreters and aid materials were sent to disaster-affected areas in March. This support facilitated effective communication with persons with hearing disabilities during the chaotic days before the central and local governments actually started moving.

At the same time, in cooperation with the Japanese Association of Social Workers with Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we conducted a mid- and long-term project involving indirect support for the self-reliance of persons with hearing disabilities through the dispatch of social workers (Certified Social Workers and Psychiatric Social Workers) with full knowledge of the characteristics of persons with hearing disabilities, and sign language or other communication skills appropriate for individual needs.

6) Providing telephone assistance, video remote interpreting and captioning for persons with hearing disabilities in disaster-affected areas

Since September of 2011, a sign language interpreting service through videophone was started for persons with hearing disabilities in disaster-affected areas. First, an operator with sign language interpreting skill takes a request from a person with disabilities via video screen and then interprets the request for the government or a hospital. In addition, information broadcast via FM radio by the government and other agencies was provided by operators to persons with disabilities through e-mail/text message.

These services are available at no cost to persons with hearing disabilities in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures who have been issued a physical disability certificate, and they have been utilized in various situations, including applications for temporary housing, various certifications and jobs. Since starting, the services have been provided on more than 6,000 occasions and are being offered at present.

7) International advocacy in collaboration with United Nations agencies and disability organizations

In collaboration with Japan Disability Forum, the Nippon Foundation produced a documentary film showing the situations being faced by disaster-affected persons with disabilities, support activities and proposals for future measures with the goal of promoting understanding among concerned persons and the public. Screening the film at international conferences promotes the incorporation of the viewpoint of persons with disabilities in future global measures for disaster reduction.

- **Documentary film jointly produced with Japan Disability Forum (JDF)**

“Message of Life: Twice as Many Persons with Disabilities Passed Away on March Eleventh”

(30 minutes)

A film depicting the situations faced by disaster-affected persons with disabilities, support activities and proposals on future measures. Produced in Japanese, English, Spanish and Korean.

• **Advocacy events at home and abroad**

1. Co-organized a session concerning the utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on accessibility of persons with disabilities to information in time of disaster, with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Information Center (UNIC). (at The Nippon Foundation, Tokyo, April 20, 2012)
2. Side event at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) on the new Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2013-2022 (in Incheon, Korea, October 31, 2012)
3. Organized a domestic debriefing session at the Diet Office Building. Mayor Futoshi Toba of Rikuzentakata City participated through simultaneous reporting on the Internet. (at the Diet Office Building, March 5, 2013)
4. Presentation (debriefing session and display booth) at the session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction of UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (Geneva, Switzerland, May 19-23, 2013)
5. Organized a “Special Event on Disaster and Disability: Lessons from Japan” as a side event at the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Disability and Development. Takashi Kubota, Vice Mayor of Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture presented an activity report. (New York, USA, September 24, 2014)
6. Co-organized “International Day for Disaster Reduction 2013: Symposium on Disabilities and Disaster Risk Reduction” with UNISDR (Rikuzentakata City, October 29, 2013)
7. Co-organized Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Changing Mindsets through Knowledge (Sendai Meeting), with UNESCAP and Rehabilitation International. (Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, April 22-23, 2014)
8. Co-organized a side event at the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with UNDESA (New York, USA, June 13, 2013)
9. Organized a side event at the 6th Asia Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) (Bangkok, Thailand, June 22-26, 2014)
10. Side event at UN Headquarters, a panel discussion on “The Promise of Technology: Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Action” for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (New York, USA, December 3, 2014)

8) Joint project with UNISDR to make the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction “an accessible conference” in which persons with disabilities participate.

By ensuring barrier-free environments at venues, accommodations and on transportation as well as access to information through sign language interpretation/real time captioning for persons with disabilities who participate in the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai on March 14-18, 2015, (the first was held in 1994 Yokohama, the second in 2005 Kobe), the Nippon Foundation promotes its project to realize an accessible conference in collaboration with the host organizer, UNISDR.

As the post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action, which will provide international guidelines for disaster reduction efforts, is expected to be formulated at the conference, we are making efforts to ensure the consideration of and measures for persons with disabilities are comprehensively incorporated in the new framework.

* Results of support provided by the Nippon Foundation to persons with disabilities after the Great East Japan Earthquake: 444,961,848 JPY in 64 projects