

March 10, 2021

Joint Message

Ten years since the Japan Earthquake and Tsunami: A message of appreciation to our partners and supporters for their global spirit of togetherness

March 11 is a special day for Japan. It is a day to reflect on the path we have taken, a day to think about where we are going, and a day to thank the world for its solidarity and support. It is also a day when the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement renews its commitment to stand together against the humanitarian crises that still threaten the world.

On this same day in 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, killing 18,428 people and displacing 470,000 others. The tsunami also caused serious damage to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, resulting in a reactor core meltdown. This was a complex triple disaster never experienced before.

The Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) was on the ground when the disaster occurred and began immediate relief operations. Red Cross hospitals in the affected areas were at the front line in saving lives.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) sent its representative and communication delegates to Japan to support the JRCS amid the chaos.

During the prolonged evacuation of affected communities, the goodwill and solidarity from the people around the world provided hope and relief to those impacted by this triple disaster. Foreign aid provided household appliances in the temporary shelters. Children received psychosocial support in "summer camps" located in safe places away from the disaster zone where they could enjoy being outdoors with the full support of carers.

In the first six months after the disaster, 894 JRCS medical teams supported hospitals and evacuation centres, treating more than 75,000 people. The JRCS distributed relief items, provided psychosocial support, restored family links, and organized blood donation drives.

The world was an "eyewitness" to the disaster as livestream videos of the tsunami and the nuclear accident were broadcast internationally. Countries and their people expressed their solidarity and support for the affected communities. Out of this solidarity, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in more than 100 countries and territories, as well as some governments, contributed a total of about 100 billion yen (about US\$ 1.24 billion) to the relief and recovery activities of the JRCS.

JRCS used this experience to blend international and domestic support to help those most in need. This was a great learning experience for the JRCS to build its new capacity.

Three months after the disaster, representatives of the JRCS, the IFRC and several sister National Societies came together to develop a recovery plan. This included providing 133,000 households with electrical household appliances, social services to support the elderly and disabled, temporary housing construction, support for children including schools and psychosocial support, rebuilding local health facilities, strengthening disaster management capacity and activities in response to the nuclear disaster.

A total of 60 projects in 10 sectors have been completed, and the details of those projects can be found in the [Final Report](#).

While many areas continue to recover from this complex disaster, some 41,000 people are still displaced, including more than 22,000 people who are unable to return to their homes due to the residual radiation. It will not be easy to restore communities to their pre-disaster state; there is still a long way to go.

Japan is a country prone to many natural disasters which has brought a lot of investment in disaster prevention. However, the massive scale of the 2011 tsunami and nuclear accident taught us that preventing loss of life and mitigating against disasters is not only about investing in the hardware, but also about having a mindset that is always ready for new crises and agile enough to act before they happen.

Nuclear disasters may be infrequent but when they do occur, can have devastating and long-term consequences for people and the environment.

As we move forward, we have reflected we have learned from this unprecedented tragedy and how we can prepare for future disasters. Recalling the Chernobyl accident 35 years ago, we must ensure the lessons learned from the Fukushima nuclear accident strengthen our disaster mitigation and prevention measures in the event of another nuclear accident. As a first step, the JRCS, the IFRC, and several sister National Societies published the "[Nuclear Disaster Guidelines for Preparedness, Response and Recovery](#)" in 2015.

The global spirit of solidarity and unity bestowed on the people of Japan saved and rebuilt lives and supported the recovery from this devastating disaster. For the past decade, JRCS has repeatedly conveyed its gratitude and thanks to the world. On this 10th anniversary memorial of this terrible disaster, we say thank you to the world again.

Today we are in the midst of new crises. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create much suffering around the world and the impact of climate change affects all of us. These crises are global challenges that can only be solved if we change our behaviour as individuals and work in a spirit of togetherness. Our global solidarity will be the driving force to overcome the world's crises, now and in the future.

Thank you to our supporters around the world.



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