



**Press Announcement
For Immediate Release**

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**Rebuilding the Human Spirit in Northern Japan
NJERF Grants \$1.1 million for Mental Health Care**

SAN FRANCISCO (April 17, 2013)—On the second anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami dozens of news articles focused on tragic stories of the thousands of people still displaced and their poor living conditions, the radiation situation in Fukushima, and the economic impact the disaster has had on Japan. But extremely little was said of the potential silent killer that still lurks behind all the physical destruction.

The series of tragic events also severely affected the mental health of the victims. The turmoil taking place within the victims could be just as destructive as what they've already lived through; therefore, immediate and long term mental health care needs to be provided to combat against debilitating symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, which could also lead to suicides.

The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) understood the importance of treating mental health issues from their past experience supporting relief efforts after the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. Immediately following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the JCCCNC organized the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (Relief Fund) and focused on supporting non-profit organizations who were working directly with people in the neighborhoods and communities that they served using a three-phase approach of Relief, Recovery, and Rebuild.

Over the past two years, the Relief Fund has helped fund dozens of projects throughout Northern Japan totaling approximately \$3 million. The projects, organized by 12 Japan NPO's, are part of the Relief Funds three-fold plan: **Relief Phase**—immediate relief needs; **Recovery Phase I and II**—address mental health needs, revive education system, support relocation services, and provide opportunities for youth to continue their college education; and lastly, the **Rebuilding Phase**-- assist in the on-going recovery efforts and help to rebuild the human spirit.

"We hope that we will be able to continue to work with the NPO's in the future—5 or 10 years from now—to discuss the on-going recovery efforts, the success's, the continuing needs, best practices and the lessons learned," mentions JCCCNC Executive Director, Paul Osaki. *"As non-profit organizations we played an important and very unique role in one of the world's greatest natural disasters of the modern world."*

The Relief Fund is in the third phase called "Rebuilding the Human Spirit," which is focusing on supporting non-profit organizations with projects that address mental health, community and social development in places such as the temporary housing facilities and in neighborhoods and

towns trying to reconstruct and rebuild themselves.

Today, the Relief Fund and the JCCCNC has announced that they have distributed \$1.1 million to seven Japan non-profit organizations to assist efforts to further rebuild the human spirit of victims and survivors of the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. This funding comes at a great time as most international aid and donations have all but ended for NPO's, and in particular, the local organizations the Relief Fund funded during its first rounds of funding.

Grants were available only for projects that address mental health and the rebuilding of community and social development needs in the Tohoku region of Japan. The JCCCNC received nine applications which seven were awarded funds of up to \$200,000 USD to support their project.

The five organizations who received funding and a description of their project are:

*Notes organizations that have previously received funding from the Relief Fund.

- **Association for Aid and Relief, Japan*** (AARJ)—AARJ is a Tokyo based organization that has been supporting individuals in Fukushima who have physical and mental issues. With the new funding AARJ will develop a new program to promote psychological well-being among evacuees in Fukushima Prefecture that will help them prepare for life after temporary housing closes, regain peace of mind and strength to deal with daily anxieties, and to prevent suicide of high risk individuals who struggle with social withdrawal and isolation.
- **Japan Emergency NGO** (JEN)—JEN has extensive experience with relief efforts around the world and with the funds provided by the Relief Fund, they will work, in Miyagi prefecture, towards rebuilding community through psycho-social care, and reducing isolation of individuals and helping the survivors regain a sense of community.
- **The National Council of YMCA's of Japan* (National YMCA)**—In cooperation with the Morioka and Sendai YMCA's, the National YMCA played a key role in providing immediate relief and provided supplies to help victims reestablish themselves in temporary housing. Their new project will enhance and increase the existing Tozanso Family Refresh-Camp (located at the base of Mt. Fuji) program(s) for displaced residents in Fukushima Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture and Iwate Prefecture. The camp addresses both mental and physical well-being of children and their parents by promoting a relaxing environment where guests can escape the daily challenges at school, home, and in the society as a whole.
- **The National Council of YMCA's of Japan* (National YMCA)**—In addition to the Tozanso Refresh-Camp, the National YMCA looks to develop a new program that will provide trauma and relief care for staff and volunteers working in Northern Japan who are suffering from similar mental and emotional trauma as the people they are trying to help.
- **Sendai YMCA***—The Sendai YMCA helped to manage volunteer training in Miyagi prefecture, the most devastated prefecture in the Tohoku region, and provided direct relief and recreational services for youth. They have now developed a new program, "Protecting our Children-Preparedness Training," that will provide disaster preparedness training and practice drills to students who can grow up knowing they can be trained citizens that can help save themselves, their family, and the community around them if they unfortunately face another disaster like this in their lifetime.
- **Sendai YMCA***—They have also developed a new camp program, "Refresh camp," specifically designed for children residing in temporary shelters; giving them relief from

the daily trauma of living in tight quarters and not having familiar personal belongings through physical activity and group games, giving the children a chance to be a children.

- **Shanti Volunteer Association* (SVA)**—The SVA assisted immediately by providing basic human needs, counseling services and physical recovery services in Kesennuma City, and are one of the few NPO's that plan to stay in the area for 3-5 years. Recently, the SVA helped initiate projects to support fishermen and women's work to create jobs and generate income. They have also been one of the most successful organizations in being able to gain the trust of seniors and children in helping them address their mental health needs. They are looking to continue offering individual and group support to parents who've lost their children; help children with mental trauma and disaster preparedness training; encourage individuals to regain their identity and rebuild a new Kesennuma.

For more information on the Northern Japan Relief Fund, please visit the relief fund website www.kokoro4Japan.org, the JCCCNC website www.jcccnc.org, or call (415) 567-5505.

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