

# Habitat for Humanity Rebuilding Japan

## UPDATE REPORT

**“The tsunami completely destroyed my house and damaged my business. I thought my life was over. However, the actions of volunteers have reminded me to stand up, live, and face another day.”**

*Business owner Hideo Takahashi,  
Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture*



HFH Japan volunteers clearing debris at a local dumpsite.  
Photo: Habitat for Humanity

Since the earthquake on 11<sup>th</sup> March and subsequent tsunami, recovery across northern Japan is now fully underway. More than 50,000 displaced families have relocated to temporary shelters. New services are being developed to meet the needs of those affected by the disaster.

Habitat for Humanity’s ‘Rebuilding Japan’ programme has continued to grow with the changing needs of the families and communities affected by the disaster. Habitat for Humanity has mobilised sixteen teams of dedicated volunteers who have worked tirelessly to clear homes and community buildings of mud and debris.

Additionally, Habitat for Humanity has continued to support its local partners – Peace Boat Volunteers in Ishinomaki and Onagawa, Miyagi Prefecture and All Hands Volunteers in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture – as they used their own volunteers to perform a wide range of critical recovery tasks.

In Ofunato, Habitat for Humanity has supported the repair of more than 50 damaged houses, helping families return home as quickly as possible. In Onagawa, home starter kits are being distributed as families move into temporary shelters.

Habitat for Humanity is coordinating with government and NGO partners for a distribution of a large number of winter kits. These would include household items such as heaters, to help families stay warm during the winter months.

Yet while reconstruction is underway, greater efforts are still required to revitalise the communities devastated by the tsunami.

Uncertainties about the future must be addressed for families to regain their homes and livelihoods, and to rebuild or create a feeling of community among neighbours. The long journey toward a sense of normality and security has only just begun.

During a visit to Japan this September, Habitat for Humanity CEO Jonathan Reckford committed to continuing Habitat for Humanity’s support through the ‘Rebuilding Japan’ programme by announcing a Community Revitalisation programme which began this year. This programme will bring shelter and other support services to communities where Habitat for Humanity is currently working as well as additional locations.

With the continued support of donors, partners and volunteers, Habitat for Humanity will continue to help disaster affected families face the challenges of the future.

Total to date	<b>‘Rebuilding Japan’ project in numbers:</b>
<b>54</b>	Homes repaired
<b>389</b>	Homes/community buildings cleared of debris
<b>341</b>	Habitat for Humanity Japan volunteers mobilized
<b>8,196</b>	Total volunteer days funded

## Kiyoko's Story: Rebuilding With Help From Volunteers



*Mrs Kiyoko Sakashita and her husband standing in the debris and mud covered backyard of their B&B. Photo: Habitat for humanity*

Sixty-Seven year old Kiyoko Sakashita owned and operated a small bed-and-breakfast guest house in Onosaki since 1993. On the day of the earthquake, she ran to the safety of a temple located on top of a hill with her husband, and her mother who is in her 80s. "I thought of nothing but escaping with my family", she said.

Kiyoko watched numbly as the great tsunami wiped out her community. About 100 families sheltered at the temple. "Onosaki was completely isolated from the main city because the bridge connecting us was destroyed. We had no way to reach out for help. About three days after the tsunami, we heard a helicopter approaching. They brought food and water and started rescuing evacuees."

Four months after the earthquake, Kiyoko was able to visit her devastated home. Kiyoko would like to re-open her B&B someday. "Volunteers came to my house almost every day to clear debris and mud. Usually, I love to talk with people, but after the disaster I was a bit depressed. The volunteers reminded me of joy, and I was able to communicate with people once again."

Smiling, Kiyoko said, "Some of the volunteers promised to come back one day to stay at my B&B, so I have to get ready for them!"

## A Volunteer's Story: Natsuki Builds Relationships



*Natsuki Ichikawa clearing debris in Ishinomaki. Photo: Habitat for Humanity*

Student Natsuki Ichikawa, 21, was one of ten Habitat for Humanity volunteers from local universities who dedicated their summer vacation to helping the affected families in the disaster area.

"When I first visited Ofunato, I spent a week clearing debris and mud. It was just a month after the tsunami, and I found the damaged city overwhelming. I tried my best to clean but it was hard to see the end." Natsuki said.

Natsuki joined two teams working in Ofunato in June and between August and mid-September worked to support the 'Rebuilding Japan' programme in Ishinomaki. Natsuki and her fellow volunteers were always looking for more ways to help the families. "The answer we found was in building relationships," she said. "If you stay a long time in the disaster area, you sometimes feel weak in the face of devastation of the city. But every time I felt weak, the people around me always motivated me and gave me more energy."

After Natsuki returns to school this fall, she will continue to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity on the weekends. She wrapped up her summer experience by saying, "I realised again how important human connection is. I gained something which cannot be bought."

# What's Planned

- Distribution of Winter kits
- Planning on extending house repair programme in Iwate Prefecture
- 2012 Community Revitalisation programmes in Iwate and Miyagi Prefecture.
- 614 'home starter kits' have been distributed in Miyagi Prefecture.



“It is heartening to see everyone working together to help Japan recover. Shovelling mud and clearing debris are not glamorous jobs. I want to thank all the volunteers who are doing the hard work of clearing and cleaning buildings so that residents can return home and regain a sense of normality.”

# What can you do?

The devastation caused by the subsequent tsunami and continuing nuclear radiation situation was, and still is, too much for any one country to deal with alone, no matter how well developed.

Habitat for Humanity is serving disaster affected communities through shelter solutions, goods distribution, volunteer mobilisation and community realisation programmes. We seek your continued support to help the 'Rebuilding Japan' programme today.

There are many ways that you can get involved with Habitat for Humanity, not only in Japan but across the world. Home is the most important place in the world and Habitat for Humanity has a vision of a world where poverty housing and homelessness have been eliminated and everyone has a safe, decent place to live.

- **Donate.** Make an online donation at [habitatforhumanity.org.uk](http://habitatforhumanity.org.uk). Text JAPA01 and your amount of £1, £2, £3, £5 or £10 to 70070. If you'd rather donate over the phone, call 01295 264240
- **Support Habitat for Humanity.** There are many different ways you can support Habitat for Humanity's work around the world, from making regular donations to taking part in challenge events. For more information on how you could support Habitat for Humanity email: [supporterservices@habitatforhumanity.org.uk](mailto:supporterservices@habitatforhumanity.org.uk), call 01295 264240 or visit [habitatforhumanity.org.uk](http://habitatforhumanity.org.uk)
- **Pray.** Pray for the people of Japan and for all of the volunteers and organisations who are striving to help rebuild Japan.

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*Kazue Murakami at a temporary shelter in Rikiuentakata city, Northern Japan  
Photo: Mikel Flamm*

