

## MERCY CORPS RESPONDS TO HISTORIC JAPAN EARTHQUAKE

Mercy Corps is working with our partner agency, Peace Winds, to respond to the massive earthquake that struck the northeast coast of Japan on March 11, killing thousands of people. The 9.0 magnitude quake was the strongest to hit Japan in at least 100 years and the fourth-largest worldwide since 1900. It triggered a 30-foot tsunami that swept away everything in its path – houses, ships, cars, buildings – and damaged all six reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station.

Mercy Corps and Peace Winds' joint response is providing immediate relief supplies to tsunami-affected families living in evacuation centers on the northeast coast of Japan. This week, we will also begin to offer post-trauma support through our signature Comfort for Kids program. We are also taking steps to begin early economic recovery in tsunami-affected zones and to improve families' access to clean water and sanitation.

### Latest Casualty Reports

According to Japanese police, the earthquake and tsunami have killed 12,000 people and an estimated 15,000 people are still missing.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that 200,000 people are still taking refuge in evacuation centers. About 260,000 people do not have access to water and 180,000 households are without electricity.

### Difficult Winter Conditions, Slow Transport

Conditions for survivors and emergency responders continue to be very difficult. Debris is extensive and fuel is scarce. Many evacuation centers still lack central heat and running water. In the snowy, freezing weather, the team handling distributions is mainly focused on helping families stay warm.

Transporting people and supplies to the disaster area is complicated by ongoing fuel shortages and the crisis at the nuclear facility.

### Emergency Supplies to Four Cities

Our response team began delivering emergency assistance to Japan on March 14. Today we are providing supplies and support to the tsunami-devastated cities of Kesennuma, Rikuzentakata, Ofunato and Minami Sanriku Cho.

Via air and road, our team has delivered three balloon shelters that house up to 100 people; 164 smaller tents that hold up to 5 people; 1,720 blankets; 1,210 kerosene space heaters; 100,000 medical face masks; 570 tarps for additional shelter; towels, mattresses, clothing and sanitary supplies; and a large supply of water and food, including bread, instant rice and fruit.



*A child plays in a sports hall that was turned into a shelter after the earthquake. (C) Reuters/Damir Sagoli, courtesy Trust.org - AlertNet*

### Comfort for Kids Program Eases Trauma

This week, Mercy Corps launches our signature Comfort for Kids program, which builds the ability of local communities to help children recover from the emotional effects of a large-scale disaster. Comfort for Kids has provided post-trauma assistance to children and caregivers in settings as diverse as New York City after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Sichuan Province of China after the powerful 2008 earthquake and, most recently, the earthquake zone of Haiti.

The Japan Comfort for Kids program will begin with a pilot at the Kesennuma evacuation center which, like the other centers where our team is delivering relief supplies, houses children whose family members are still missing. The continuing

stress of aftershocks, combined with grief and loss, make it a priority to provide the children with emotional support.

Mercy Corps expert team is working to ensure that the program is appropriately adapted for Japanese children and for the specific context of the disaster-affected region in northern Japan. We also plan to adopt some elements specifically for the many elderly citizens who have been affected by the disaster. Trainings will be conducted in Japanese and program publications will be distributed in Japanese and English.

### **Next Steps: Relief and Recovery**

Mercy Corps and Peace Winds plan to continue sending urgently needed relief items to Kesenuma, Rikuzentakata, Ofunato and Minami Sanriku Cho in the coming days.

The response team is making steps to begin an economic recovery program in the tsunami-affected north, which would provide survivors with cash or vouchers to use at local merchants to meet their immediate needs for food, clothing, and other basic supplies. This type of voucher program would allow survivors to prioritize their own needs and also support the badly affected local economy.

The team is also working to improve families' access to clean water and sanitation. In the city of Ofunato, we have enlisted the help of local carpenters to construct a temporary bathing facility by re-using wood debris from the tsunami zone.

### **A Ten-Year Partnership**

Over the past decade, Mercy Corps and Peace Winds have worked together numerous times to respond to disasters. Our organizations cooperated to provide humanitarian assistance to families in war-torn northern Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the US Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.

We also jointly responded to the massive 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran, which required a large-scale and complicated logistical operation.

Peace Winds is dedicated to the support of people in distress, threatened by conflict, poverty or other turmoil. The organization was established in 1996. It has provided emergency humanitarian relief, and assistance with restoration and development, to refugees who fled their countries, domestic refugees who suffer in their own countries, disaster survivors and poverty-stricken people.

Our partnership combines Peace Winds' Japanese base and global reach with Mercy Corps' expertise responding to disasters around the world, to assist the Japanese people.

### **How to Help**

Mercy Corps is accepting donations toward our Japan earthquake response. Your gift to our Japan Earthquake Response Fund helps meet the needs of families affected by the disaster.

To make a **donation online**:

<https://www.mercycorps.org/donate/japan>

To send a **donation by mail**:

Mercy Corps  
Japan Earthquake Response Fund  
Dept NR  
PO Box 2669  
Portland, OR 97208

To set up a **personal fundraising page**:

<http://www.mercycorps.org/projects/japan>

For **updates** on our work in Japan:

<http://www.mercycorps.org/japanearthquake>

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**You must be the change  
you wish to see in the world.**

~ Gandhi



**Be the change**