

## The Great East Japan Earthquake: Messages from the World



U.S. Many people around the world sent messages to encourage the earthquake victims. They included scholars supported by the Japan Foundation in the past. Messages from American children were carried to the quake-ravaged region by journalists who came to Japan. Photo: Aikawa Kenichi



Spain Mon Libre, held each year in Barcelona in eastern Spain, is a festival of children's literature. The festival that took place on April 23, 2010, was turned into "an event to pray for Japan's reconstruction." The Japan Foundation cosponsored a workshop by Gomi Taro, the Japanese illustrator and writer of children's books. Using brushes and the palm of their hands, children freely painted colorful pictures on a 25-meter-long piece of paper on the floor to cheer up the quake victims.

Photo: Coco Books



China The Center for Face-to-Face Exchanges has been set up in various places in China for young people to sample Japanese culture. Twenty-three students who gathered at the center in Sichuan experienced a major earthquake in 2008. They sent a joint card and video message accessible at <http://www.chinacenter.jp/japanese/shinsai/shinsai.php>.



Uzbekistan Some of the researchers who came to Japan at the invitation of the Foundation organized volunteer groups. They cooked for the victims and helped remove debris. Tuychiev Mukhiddin, a researcher at Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies (right), went into the disaster area together with some Muslims living in Japan.



Australia The staff at the Japan Foundation, Sydney, Australia supported local charity events with local volunteers on weekends to raise funds for Japan. The website *Australia Supports Japan* was also created to exchange information about the situation in Japan, being a place where Australians could post heartfelt messages.

On March 11, 2011, news of the unprecedented tragedy quickly spread throughout the world by television, newspaper, and the Internet. Messages of condolences and encouragement poured into the overseas offices and Tokyo headquarters of the Japan Foundation, and a variety of support was extended. All this made us at the Japan Foundation realize that we are indeed citizens of the global community and impressed upon us the importance of partnership with the rest of the world.

Not only specialists and members of various organizations who have built strong relations with us through our past activities, but overseas people in general sent

heart-warming messages. Reports on charity events, fund-raising activities, and opinions about the disaster published in the media also arrived. This circle of action has now spread across the world, encouraging people in Japan and demonstrating to us that cooperation between Japan and other countries is becoming increasingly important. Taking advantage of the international human networks we have fostered, and our experiences and know-how in disaster prevention and reconstruction, the Japan Foundation plans to actively continue to put more projects in motion and contribute to the strengthening of ties among nations and reconstruction of the disaster region.



**Germany**

Discussion was held about the role of various mass and social media in disaster situation with journalists and researchers. (Symposium "The Catastrophes in Japan and the Role of Conventional and New Media—A Comparative Look at How Japan and Germany Reported on the Earthquake" co-organized with Japanese-German Center Berlin)



**Egypt**

At Tahrir Square in Cairo, the staff of the Japan Foundation, Cairo made video clips of messages from people who are studying Japanese. These videos were uploaded on YouTube for many people to watch. Passersby joined in the filming of the videos and sent words of encouragement.



**Turkey**

In Ankara, students at the Turkish Japanese Foundation Cultural Center wrote messages in Japanese in joint cards and sent them to Japan.



**Vietnam**

About 500 teachers and students of the Vietnam National University gathered to mourn the death of the victims and to support Japan's reconstruction efforts. They listened to explanations on Japan's culture and history, and ten thousand paper cranes made by the sponsors and students were sent to Fukushima University.



**U.S.**

At Webster University in Missouri, Japanese Students Association hosted a fundraising event called "Hope for Japan." Association members, in cooperation with local Japanese communities, held a flea market and Japanese drum concert to collect donations. A symposium on the earthquake also took place.

## The Japan Foundation projects related to the Great East Japan Earthquake

### 1. Deepening the understanding of Japanese people and society

We translate the growing post-disaster sense of solidarity into a deeper understanding of Japan and also to introduce Japanese culture from a variety of perspectives to counter the stereotypical belief of Japan and its people.

### 2. Contributing to revitalization of Japanese society

We support international cultural exchange programs in the disaster region, including introduction of its culture overseas. We will also provide the region with opportunities to regain vitality and hope for reconstruction through closer ties with the rest of the world.

### 3. Sharing experiences of the disaster with the world community

We encourage other countries to promote education in disaster prevention through intellectual dialogue and by sharing Japan's earthquake experiences and information about the process of recovery, and thus make contributions to the international community.

### 4. Providing assistance for events overseas to support Japan and commemorate the disaster victims

We cooperate with people in other countries who are organizing events in support of Japan by making our networks in various regions available and by providing know-how and venues for such events.