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Final Report on Kumamoto Earthquakes Response



August 2017 CWS Japan

I. Project Background:

It has been over year since the Kumamoto Earthquakes measuring 7.0 on the Japanese scale twice in April 2016. The earthquakes caused over 200 deaths including disaster-related deaths, and over 40,000 evacuees currently live in temporary housing. The disaster has affected the lives and livelihoods of the affected communities even to-date.

Immediately after the earthquake, CWS Japan dispatched its staff to assess the damage, and to see the possible support it could provide to its partner, YMCA. Despite the serious damage to their own facilities caused by the earthquakes, YMCA Kumamoto started to operate two designated evacuation centers in the immediate aftermath of the main shock. Since the earthquakes, apart from the evacuation centers, they also opened community support centers in temporary housings, a volunteer center to accommodate the volunteers from all over Japan, and trauma care programs for children with financial support from Japan and overseas.



In October 2016, the municipalities closed the evacuation centers and transferred the evacuees to temporary housings. YMCA Kumamoto, with its commitment to continue to serve the affected people, they decided to operate two community support centers in Mashiki and Mifune Town and to operate volunteer work station in the affected communities in Aso Region. The community support centers played a prominent role in providing residents counseling on daily problems which were critical for their recovery process. CWS Japan has assisted both the emergency phase work of YMCA Kumamoto and following reconstruction project of YMCA Kumamoto for the affected people to recover from the devastating earthquake during approximately one-year period (April 2016 - March 2017).

II. Emergency Phase Support

Immediately after the onset of two large scale earthquakes in Kumamoto, CWS Japan started to liaise with its ecumenical partners, particularly YMCA Japan. YMCA Japan was fast in mobilizing its national-level networks to support its member YMCA in Kumamoto, and CWS Japan showed its

solidarity and commitment to support the relief and recovery efforts. YMCA Kumamoto had to stop its daily operation (such as gymnastic class, nursery schools, vocational schools, etc.) and dedicated all its resources for relief operation. This was a humanitarian decision, but it was also clear that without appropriate level of fundraising, their core operation (after the quake response) could suffer tremendously.

Therefore, CWS Japan decided to focus its support to YMCA's fundraising efforts on the ground. Together with communication team in YMCA Kumamoto, CWS Japan supported the issuing of Y-Story (field based stories on needs and human faces in relief and recovery) which was produced in both Japanese and English versions. CWS Japan supported issuing of first 16 stories, and the spontaneous efforts by YMCA Kumamoto still continues to date. The stories are available from below link:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/233x8ii1d6kvqeg/AADn96LFa4yjL6CC_L5YHH-Fa?dl=0

Furthermore, CWS Japan granted more than USD 14,000 in support of YMCA's evacuation center operation, where they have supported daily needs of over 2,000 evacuees.

III. Recovery Phase Support

The construction of temporary housing complex has started soon after the earthquake, and all evacuation centers closed in October 2016. NGO, including YMCA Kumamoto, played an important role in the transition from evacuation center to temporary housing of evacuees. According to the past lessons from Kobe Earthquake in 1995 and East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011, vulnerable groups including elderlies have particularly difficult time in such transition, and sometimes we observe lonely



deaths by those who do not have anyone to take care of them. Therefore, CWS Japan and YMCA Kumamoto decided to support community rebuilding in the temporary housing complex as recovery phase project. The objectives of the project were as below:

1. To revitalize communities in the disaster-affected areas
2. To rebuild the disaster-affected people's livelihood

3. To alleviate the disaster-affected children's traumas

The activities implemented in this phase include:

<In Mashiki Town Community Support Center>

■ **Making home visits to avoid lonely deaths of elderly people**

Social workers conducted a survey of the current living conditions of 220 households by making home visits for interviews on inhabitants, situations at the time of disaster and their rebuilding plans. They also convened weekly coordination meetings with administrative officers of municipal government, social welfare councils, regional support centers and NGOs in Mashiki Town to share the current situation and issues in temporary housings.

■ **Organizing social gatherings for the temporary housing residents**

Organized singing, tea parties, and handicraft sessions three days a week in the meeting places, invited firefighters to conduct an emergency drill in the temporary housing complex, and organized a choir concert in collaboration with graduates of YMCA Kumamoto Welfare Technical School.

■ **Organizing children's programs**

Conducted a survey for the households having school children to identify their needs, and held study-support programs for school children with the help of YMCA student volunteers

■ **Organizing aged people's programs**

Invited an aerobics instructor to organize exercise workshops for elderly residents.

<In Mifune Town Community Support Center>

■ **Making home visits to avoid lonely deaths of elderly people**

Held regular home visits to monitor the living conditions of aged people living alone, and attended bi-weekly meeting with officers from municipal government offices, other community support centers, health centers, and regional support centers.

■ **Organizing gatherings for the temporary housing residents**

Organized choir, origami, coloring and handicraft sessions, and held potluck luncheons with the residents.

■ **Organizing children's programs**

Conducted a volunteer consultation meeting for enrollment of higher education and employment.

■ **Organizing aged people's programs**



Organized sessions for exercise and recreation once a week which contributed to build relationships of trust and mutual cooperation among the residents, and a volunteer nurse held health check-ups of elderlies.

<Supporting community and farming recovery in Aso Region>

■ Supporting affected communities' recovery in Aso Region

Conducted exercise sessions for the temporary housing residents biweekly, and organized five children's events in temporary housings with the attendance of 218 children in total. Also, three events including performances, magic show and music concert for the affected communities were held in collaboration with Yamato Disaster Volunteer Network in Yamato City, Kanagawa Prefecture. The team also attended a biweekly meeting of Aso City Disaster Volunteer Network at the Aso City Social Welfare Council Office, and held Aso Reconstruction Symposium in collaboration with Aso City Disaster Volunteer Network.

■ Providing agricultural recovery support

Using volunteers that came to help, YMCA Kumamoto assisted an affected strawberry farmer with cleaning up their greenhouse and farmlands devastated by the earthquake.

■ Cleaning of destroyed houses

YMCA mobilized volunteers to help with packing household belongings before completely demolishing the affected houses. The volunteers also helped with transporting such belongings to temporary warehouses.

<Organizing camps to heal affected children's traumas>

YMCA Kumamoto organized a camp for 34 elementary school children from Mashiki and Mifune Town which were the worst-affected areas at the time of Kumamoto Earthquakes. It took place in Unzen, Nagasaki Prefecture with the aims to provide opportunity to psychologically recover from earthquake shocks.



IV. Conclusion

As an outcome of the project intervention, the team has observed positive impact within relief and recovery process in Kumamoto. First, the partner organization (YMCA Kumamoto) gained strong trust and profile from the affected communities. This is critical also from sustainability

perspective as YMCA Kumamoto will exist in the community in the future as well. Second, appropriate support was provided to elderly people with early diagnosis of cases that required referrals. Third, residents of temporary shelter complex re-gained the sense of community. This was critical to ensure that no one is left behind in the recovery process, and to avoid lonely deaths within the housing complex. Lastly, this relief and recovery operation definitely strengthened ecumenical collaboration to disasters in Japan. Both YMCA and CWS Japan are part of National Christian Council in Japan network, and members of Japan Ecumenical Taskforce for SAIGAI (Japanese word for disasters).

V. Case Story

Miho Nakamura (Ms.), Social Worker of Mifune Community Support Center

Miho is a YMCA social worker covering 21 households in Kikura Temporary Housing Complex. Among her beneficiaries, there is a welfare recipient of 57-year-old woman living with her 80-year-old mother. The daughter lost her job after the disaster because of requirement to be at home due to her mother's nursing-care. They were told to remove their household belongings from the public housing by the municipality before the demolition process. While the daughter didn't know what to do about it, she became mentally exhausted.



As a social worker, Miho was holding home visits to provide consultation. She suggested the daughter apply to the municipality for requalifying the level of care needed. As a result, her mother's care level was upgraded to be able to use day-care facility three times a week (extent of day-care one can receive depends on grading of care level in Japan). Furthermore, she found a part-time job at the day-care facility where her mother goes. Miho also managed to find some volunteers who could help them clean their house.

As the daughter's situation became changed, she started to have more mental space and a positive thought. As such, YMCA social worker plays an important role in improving the quality of affected residents' lives and to speed up their recovery process.