

# JAPAN NOTES: SPECIAL EDITION

# THE ROAD AHEAD

## RECOVERING FROM 3/11



Dear Friends,

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This special edition of **JAPAN NOTES** provides an update of recovery efforts in Tohoku. Three separate individuals/groups from St. Louis went to Japan this summer to see the affected areas of Tohoku. They witnessed the slow but steady recovery and **the challenge ahead**. Uma Segal, Professor of Social Work at UMSL and her colleague, Professor Tokie Anmei from Tsukuba University, visited Ishinomaki in June. Edson Kodama, Secretary General of Junior Chamber International, which is headquartered in St. Louis, went to Minamisanku and Kensenuma in early July. I traveled with Richard Colignon, Professor of Sociology at Saint Louis University, and my long-time friend, Hiromi Ishida, to Ishinomaki, Onagawa, and Ogatsu in late July, 2012. We hope you enjoy reading our reports.

This special edition of JAPAN NOTES also includes a link to a report entitled [US Giving Report](#). It provides a total estimate of Americans' donations to Japan at **\$630 Million**. You may recall that the JAS, JASWA, and Japan Society together raised \$13,217 last year and sent the collected fund to the Japan Society of New York. The report indicates that the total money collected by the Japan-America Societies in the U.S. was staggering 24 million (US Giving Report, p. 2). The Japan Society of New York's alone raised \$12 million and is listed in the single fund chart (also in page 2).

Thank you for keeping hope alive for the people of Tohoku.

Sincerely,

Chikako Usui



# Long Road to Recovery for Northeast Japan

Edson A. Kodama, JCI  
Secretary General

*Aug 13, 2012*

The aftermath of the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami that hit Northeast (Tohoku) Japan on March 11, 2011 saw over 340,000 displaced people in the region and shortages of food, water, shelter, medicine and fuel for survivors.

On March 12, 2012, one year after the tragedy, the Japanese National Police Agency report confirmed 15,867 deaths, 6,109 injured and 2,909 missing across twenty prefectures, as well as 129,225 buildings that totally collapsed, with a further 254,204 buildings which “half collapsed” and another 691,766 buildings that were partially damaged.

Throughout the media, so many numbers describe the dimensions of these tragedies, however, during my trip to the affected area in the Northeast of Japan in July 2012, I tried to center my focus on the people who felt, first hand, the force of nature and whose experiences brought a more personal perspective to what we all saw in the news.

I had the opportunity to visit the places, speak to people, listen to their stories and be amazed by the positive energy that they are all

using to rebuild their homeland from the rubble.

Minamisanriku was among the cities most severely hit by the tsunami, with its buildings being largely destroyed and over half of the town’s population of 19,170 going missing or almost certainly dead.



The town had two evacuation centers where residents could go in the event of a tsunami – one on the southern headland overlooking the town, and another back from the center of the town. Although both were 20 meters (65.6 ft.) above sea level, the tsunami inundated them and washed the people inside away.

During my recent visit to Minamisanriku, we noticed a lot of

new construction occurring and a provisional shopping center had been rebuilt. People gathered there and worked together to bring their lives back to normal.

As we drove around, we could still smell a strong odor in the air in certain areas inland. On a large flat plain where the city’s downtown used to lie, a steel structure stands still. This building’s skeleton became a focal point for the tragedy, where people went to deposit flowers, mementos, and pray to those who lost their lives.

I looked up at the structure which once was the Minamisanriku Disaster Management Center, and I found it hard to believe that the building was submerged by water from the ocean.

This is the very place where two people were working on the day the tsunami hit this town; two people with two different destinies.

Miki Endo (遠藤未希), a 25 year-old employee of Minamisanriku Disaster Management Department, was hailed in the Japanese news media as a heroine for continuing to broadcast warnings and alerts over a community

loudspeaker system as the tsunami came in. She was credited with saving many lives. The three-story headquarters of the department remained standing but was completely gutted, with only a red-colored steel skeleton remaining; in the aftermath of the disaster, Endo was missing and was later confirmed to have died.



On the day of the tsunami Jin Sato (佐藤仁), the mayor of Minamisanriku was holding a meeting at the same Minamisanriku s Disaster Management Centre. As the waters surged in he and his staff retreated up the floors. But the three-story building was not high enough.

Thirty of them found themselves on the roof clinging on for their lives. A further 20 were swept away to their deaths, never to be seen again. Jin Sato and nine others survived by holding onto the building's communications

mast, watching helplessly as the town was submerged around them; watching as their friends and colleagues were torn away.

As with so many survivors, Mayor Jin Sato does not see his former home as just mud and rubble. To all of them, it is still their home; that muddy ground is still personal; the place where their memories are, and they have taken up to them to rebuild their town for future generations.



Mayor Jin Sato



*Photo in front of the Minamisanriku s Disaster Management Centre building during my recent trip in July 15, 2012.*



## Tohoku after 500+ Days

Chikako Usui, Hiromi Ishida, and Richard Colignon



Area Map with Ishinomaki and Onagawa (Kusaka Mari at: <http://ishinomaki-photo.blogspot.jp/2012/04/10.html>)

We toured Ishinomaki (石巻), Onagawa (女川), and Okatsu (雄勝) in Miyagi prefecture on July 24-25, 2012. Mr. Hiroshi Abe from the Lion's Club International in Ishinomaki gave us a comprehensive tour of the area. The city of Ishinomaki and the towns of Onagawa and Okatsu experienced the most extensive destruction from the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011. The scenic coastal line of Tohoku is known for rias formation, teeth like (or treelike) configuration that is extremely irregular and deeply indented. This topography is ideal for small fishing ports and harbors. Five hundred meter high mountains about the seacoast separating areas of flat land where residential homes, factories,

schools, government offices, and hospitals were built. The unique features of the rias coastline also produced a kind of hydraulic destructive force with increasing depth and velocity of the tsunami wave as it moved inland. The rias served as pathways of massive destruction conveying the tsunami waves inland.

### Extent of Destruction

Ishinomaki is the second biggest city in Miyagi prefecture. It was the city with 160,000 people. The city lost nearly 4,000 (3,938) people or 2% of the population in the disaster. The town of Onagawa where 10,000 people lived in some 15 small villages lost 10% of its population. There is a nuclear power plant in Onagawa. Ironically, this nuclear power plant building provided protection and saved the lives of 200 people whose homes were destroyed by the tsunami. The nuclear power plant has been in cold shutdown since the earthquake/tsunami of 3/11.

A building still left upside-down



## Debris (がれき)

The City of Ishinomaki has 60 million tons of disaster debris in massive mountains of accumulation, which accounts for 30% of all the debris in the entire affected Tohoku region (that is, Miyagi, Iwate, and Fukushima prefectures). So far, 10% of the debris has been moved, sorted, burned, and shipped elsewhere as landfill. During our tour, we saw blocks and blocks of building foundations and mountains of multicolored debris some reaching 30 meters in height and blocks long that are yet to be moved and sorted. In Onagawa, 1,637 vehicles have been scrapped to date.

Earlier this year the central government has asked other prefectures and cities to take disaster debris and some of them have accepted them. The media have widely supported the need for more cooperation to among prefectures to receive these debris. However, during our trip we learned that there is no need to ship the disaster debris to other prefectures as debris removal and disposal will create new and desperately needed jobs in the city.



A common sight: A Mountain of Debris

## Temporary Housing (仮設住宅)

There are 3,852 family households in Onagawa. The tsunami destroyed more than 3,200 buildings (including homes). The people who had stayed in evacuation centers and shelters now live in temporary apartment housing. The Onagawa government has built 1,294 temporary housing units, each equipped with air conditioning, TV, refrigerator, washing machine, microwave oven, and a rice cooker. People moved to these temporary

housing units from May 2011 to November 2011 based on lottery. These housing units are free of charge, except for utility fees.



During our trip, we saw four such temporary housing complexes. Each temporary housing complex included 40 to 200 apartments. Most apartments are 2LDK, consisting of 2 rooms with living room, dining area, kitchen, bath, and the toilet.



Temporary Housing Units in Different Locations

## Residential Relocation

According to the government plan, people are to live in these temporary housing for up to two years, until their permanent housing units become available. Since July 2012 the town has begun the process of assessing priorities of each family's needs for permanent housing. The town must find new areas for residential development as the flat areas where the families once lived are no longer permitted for re-building. This is a new challenge for the sea coast town that has very limited flat land for residential development. Only those

who can afford buying new properties on higher ground have moved out the temporary housing. The overwhelming majority of the families living in the temporary housing are dealing with the fact that their villages will not be re-built and they must re-start their lives somehow and somewhere. One compounding problem is that new homes will be built on the higher grounds where the access to basic necessities (such as grocery stores, medical services and government offices) may be limited.

## Employment

Businesses are reluctant to re-establish themselves in the town on the speculation that their business will not return as people will be moving to new subdivisions or even out of the city. Factories are unwilling to incur the replacement costs of mature businesses causing acute shortage of jobs in the area. For example, in Ishinomaki Port, which was one of the biggest fisheries in Japan, only 20% of fisheries and processing factories are back to pre-disaster capacity. There is a long line of people seeking employment in the City's employment service office, The city's parking lots are completely filled with job seekers every day. There are over 7,000 people looking for work while there are 4,000 positions advertised and many of these positions are temporary or part time jobs.

## Disaster relief fund

The victims and survivors have received compensation from three different sources: national government, prefectural and/or city government, and disaster relief organizations such as the Japanese Red Cross Society. For example, we learned that the amount of housing relief given from the national government is determined by (1) one's future plan, that is, one will rebuild/buy new homes, repair existing homes, or will rent; (2) the extent of damage sustained to the home (fully destroyed or partly destroyed); and (3) household size. Thus, in a hypothetical scenario, a couple whose home has been completely destroyed and wishes to buy a new home receives 3 million yen (about \$30,000). Other kinds of compensations are made for deaths, dwelling damage, children, and seniors.

According to the Japanese Red Cross Society website, the total amount of 3,145 oku yen (\$3.1 billion\*) has been paid out to each victim/survivor

family. This translates as 88% of the total relief funds donated to Japanese Red Cross Society within Japan (not including foreign donations) have been dispersed to the affected individuals/families.

## Volunteers after 500+ Days

After the post-disaster recovery period, communities began to develop their own perspectives for re-building by assessing what needs to be replaced or restored within complex political and financial circumstances. While the disaster recovery processes seem like moving targets, it is intermediate volunteer organizations and individual volunteers that keep the hope alive. They have been the bright spot in this disaster. Intermediate organizations like the network of Lions Clubs provide coordination of individual



Lion's Club International Ishinomaki Office (From left, Hiromi Ishida, Hiroshi Abe, Richard Colignon, and Chikako Usui)

volunteers, allocation of resources, and communication to government authorities of what has taken place and what is still needed.

Many young volunteers came to the area. While some came for a short duration, many others came to help on weekends and continued their efforts for months. Some others have become long-term relief workers by staying in the affected area without returning to their home towns for months at a time. The kinds of relief and recovery work they did changed with time. Initially, volunteers spent a lot of time moving debris, cleaning the deposits from the disaster, moving around boxes of supplies and handing them out. After 500+ days, they are in

6 \* For convenience, the exchange rate of \$1 = 100 yen is used.)

demand for more specific, skilled work, including handy men's jobs as many residential homes need a wide variety of repairs. The children also need more attention.

We met Kinako Fujizoe, a young volunteer who has stayed in Ishinomaki for more than a year. Her current project is to help the children take photos. She goes to different schools and helps them make photo albums so that they can document this part of their lives and have something to build on the family identity when they lost everything in the disaster. Lacking material supplies, she makes use of cardboard boxes. Children enjoy making their own family photo albums from a scratch. She showed us some of beautiful hand-made albums. We learned that she used to be a professional photographer and that she is happy to have found projects with children using her skills with photography.



Kinako Fujizoe with a photo album

Notes: All the photos in this report were taken by Chikako Usui

*Chikako Usui, Ph. D. is President of Japan America Society of St. Louis and Associate Professor of Sociology at University of Missouri-St. Louis. Hiromi Ishida is a cultural/art specialist and lives in the Mr. Fuji area. Richard A. Colignon, Ph. D. is Chair and Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Saint Louis University.*

## Ishinomaki (石巻) In June 2012

By Uma A. Segal, Ph.D. & Tokie Anme, Ph.D.

There are few who have not seen some images of the devastation ravaged upon the north-eastern part of Japan by the massive 9.0 earthquake and the ensuing *tsunami* on March 11, 2011. Most of us not immediately touched by it, were impressed by the fortitude and seeming rapidity with which the Japanese people and government dealt with the effects of this terrible natural disaster and its far reaching consequences. Then, in addition to the earthquake and *tsunami*, the additional complexities of the problems associated with the nuclear reactor in Fukushima resulted in further flight and economic distress. A trip to the area reveals that, despite clean-up efforts, despite the contributions of governmental and non-governmental organizations, and despite the desire of local residents to rebuild their lives, life in the area has been forever changed.

In June 2012, Tokie Anme, Ph.D., Professor of International Community Care and Lifespan Development: Empowerment Sciences Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba in Tsukuba, Japan and Uma A. Segal, Ph.D., Professor, School of Social Work and Fellow, International Studies and Programs, University of Missouri St. Louis, USA took a trip by train and bus from Tokyo to Sendai, passing Fukushima (where governmental regulations prevented visitors), and arriving in the beautiful Matsushima Bay, strangely relatively untouched by either the earthquake or the *tsunami* of 2011. The tranquility and serenity of the Bay belied the struggles faced by thousands of residents just a short distance away in Ishinomaki in the Miyagi Prefecture.



*Matsushima Bay*

Debris from the disaster has been cleaned up along the national highway that runs by the Pacific Coast. The trip from Matsushima Bay to Ishinomaki, ordinarily negotiable also by train, now requires the use of bus transportation (managed by Japan Railways) as the damage caused by the *tsunami* to the rail system has not yet been completely rebuilt. This comes as one of the first surprises to the visitor who is used to the efficiency and the intricacies of the Japanese rail infrastructure. As our bus wove its way along the coastline toward Ishinomaki, the effects of the *tsunami* became evident. In this relatively rural part of Japan, isolated building structures remain abandoned and broken, providing a glimpse into the experience of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011. However, life has returned as people have rebuilt the occasional farmhouse and reestablished themselves.

The calm of the panorama of green grass and rice fields, give no indication of the thousands of homes and businesses that covered that area less than 18 months ago and that have been washed into oblivion by the wrath of the *tsunami*.

Once we arrived in the quiet town of Ishinomaki, we were greeted by the sights and sounds of a small, bustling, and quaint town. The streets are fairly narrow and the covered walkways connecting the stores provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. Little of the destruction is readily evident in this town, but as one walks along

the streets, one sees unplanned gaps between buildings where homes and businesses once stood. In other instances, there are buildings that have been partially salvaged, with the first floor remaining un-restored while people live on the upper levels.



*En-route to Ishinomaki*





But over a year has elapsed. We do not see the progress that says that life has quite returned to its original state, nevertheless, residents have picked up the pieces and returned to some state of normalcy in their daily routines. Housing and shelters, through the support of funds from governmental and non-governmental organizations, have helped assuage some of the difficulties, but the social, emotional, and personal losses are usually not evident to the casual passer-by.

Professor Anme and I visited the community agency developed by Ms. Sanae Ochiai, a principal of an elementary school in Yokohama, who took an early retirement in the spring of 2011 to move to Ishinomaki to volunteer in any way possible. After a year of working with different volunteer programs, when most of the debris was finally removed, and as NGOs and governmental personnel began turning their efforts in other directions, Ms. Ochiai recognized that the reconstruction was far from complete. Emotional scars and persistent fears and insecurities greatly affected residents, and to protect themselves further emotional injury, several were isolating themselves and falling into deep depression.

With her retirement funds, Ms. Ochiai opened a community center on the main street of Ishinomaki, and with the in-kind and financial help of the community who would benefit from its presence and local businesses, she has begun a variety of educational and support programs that promote interaction, develop skills, and provide a sanctuary for personal healing. Professor Anme had visited Ishinomaki and the Mode Salon Sugawara community center a few months earlier. She had met several clients there and in their homes, and on this day in June, one of those beneficiaries of the community center was present when we arrived.



With her unabashed praise for the community center and Ms. Ochiai, the resident we met at the center indicated progress in her personal life, giving credit to Ms. Ochiai. Professor Anme was able to attest to the improvement in this resident's outlook and her mental health. Ms. Ochiai hopes to soon

make the community center self sufficient, turn it over to the Ishinomaki residents, and return to her home in Yokohama that she left in mid – 2011, thus sealing the process of empowerment and self-determination for these residents. Below is a photograph of Ms. Ochiai (second from the left) and the Ishinomaki resident who has so benefited from the community center that she now offers her services as a volunteer; they are flanked by Tokie Anme on the left; I am on the right.



*Mode Salon Sugawara*

Following our visit at the Mode Salon Sugawara community center, Anme Sensei and I walked up Hiyoriyama Hill in the center of Ishinomaki, received a panoramic view of the area, and became particularly aware of the absence of buildings. The walk up was beautiful, the weather was good, and the homes that had survived the *tsunami* were small but well maintained. Often, homes that have access to coastlines are particularly attractive to residents and the prices are higher for them than is the norm for those homes found further inland. This was the case in Ishinomaki. Now, however, after the terrifying occurrences of March 2011, homes on the hill have increased dramatically in value, while the value of those still standing at lower levels has declined.



*Temple atop Hiyoriyama Hill*

The top of Hiyoriyama Hill revealed a peaceful little temple, and after we had paid our respects, we returned to look down at the coastline. Below are photographs of the temple, a board that displays a photograph of the vista prior to the *tsunami*, and the present view from the top. Clearly, life is not the same.

*Pre-2011 tsunami Vista*



*June 2012 from Hiyoriyama Hill*



As we surveyed the area, Anme Sensei overheard the conversations of some residents who had brought with them their guests. They spoke of the terror they experienced as they ran up the mountain to avoid the effects of the *tsunami* and the fate suffered by so many. They said the weather was cold and they huddled together, with loved ones and with strangers, for warmth – both physical and emotional. Yes, it was more than a traumatic experience; it was an occurrence that most of us cannot begin to fathom, and regardless of what assistance they receive, those who went through it have been forever altered. Nevertheless, the resilience of the residents is evident in the lovely flowers dotted along the city streets.



Rose bushes along the street



I was privileged to travel to Ishinomaki, honored to meet a woman who has given so much of herself for so long to help in a quiet way, and grateful to Professor Tokie Anme for making this opportunity possible. My nine short visits to Japan since 1996 have presented me with experiences in Japan that are always eye opening and rewarding. Of the several Japanese people I have met professionally, there are a number I am pleased to now call friends, and I find that despite my poor Japanese, my not infrequent cultural ineptness, and our apparent visible differences, the warmth and generosity with which I am always greeted, keep me returning.



*In Nikko, on Father's Day, with Tokie Anme's father and husband*

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