On 11 March 2011 at 05:46 (UTC) Japan was struck by an earthquake of a magnitude 9.0, depth 24km, with the epicenter off its north-east coast. The earthquake generated a devastating tsunami (up to 38m waves) on the Pacific coast, whose consequences in terms of death toll, injuries, economic damage and environmental damage are still being calculated. On March 21, the World Bank estimated damage between US$122 billion and $235 billion. Japan's government said the cost of the earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northeast could reach $309 billion, making it the most expensive natural disaster on record.

HOUSING:

- Japan's National Police Agency said on April 3, 2011, that 190,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged by the quake and tsunami. Of those, 45,700 were destroyed. The damaged buildings included 29,500 structures in Miyagi Prefecture, 12,500 in Iwate Prefecture and 2,400 in Fukushima Prefecture.
- Extensive work is being done to clean out the dirt from homes that have been flooded.
- According to the Headquarters for Emergency Disaster Control, 11,564 temporary houses are under construction, and 4,679 houses will be constructed in the near future. Mr. Satoshi Sugai, National Disaster Management Director of Japan Red Cross Society estimated the target of Dec 2011 will be difficult to be successful.
- The temporary housings will be provided with refrigerators, washing machines, washers, heaters, etc.

FOOD SECURITY:

- Basic food supplies have been provided for the evacuation centers. The abundance of supplies and food distributed varies according to each evacuation center. Some centers are well stocked while others are not.
- One evacuation center that we visited houses about 100 people. They offer to meals a day, breakfast and dinner. They requested hot meals to be provided especially for lunch.
- Hot nutritious meals seems to be the need for the victims as the weather is still cold. Rice balls are not enough to keep the people healthy, and to prevent them from getting other diseases.

HEALTH

- No major disease outbreak has been reported but there have been reports of disease on a small scale at the evacuation centers.
Health conditions for the elderly and physically challenged are not good in the evacuation centers. The elderly complain of cold and body soreness from sleeping on cold floors. The physically challenged in general are not able to be cared for adequately in the evacuation centers and most have gone home, where food and services are not made available.

Health promotions and various healthy activities/exercises will be useful for the people to stay healthy as temporary housings will not be available anytime soon.

**PSYCHOSOCIAL:**
- The psychological toll on those who survived the disaster is a major challenge that most organizations we spoke to has raised their concerns. TELL reported that there is an increase in calls of suicidal thoughts.
- The threat of worsening radiation remains a worrisome risk for volunteers and care providers as well as those who are displaced.
- Japan already has an extremely high rate of suicide and with the loss of livelihood, and loss of loved ones the threat of suicide will become even more significant. There are fears that many people may experience trauma in this disaster.
- There are needs of psychosocial activities that can help the people recover slowly. Activities such as playing, music, art, massage (for elderly) as well as simply talking to people in a nice manner and respectful to local culture can be very useful.

**WASH:**
- As of April 19, 25,000 households in Iwate, 55,000 households in Miyagi and 12,000 households in Fukushima were without water.
- Most evacuation sights have no baths. Mobile bathing facilities provided by the self defense forces. For most Japanese, bathing is a part of their culture and a source of relaxation.

**EARLY RECOVERY:**
- Heavy equipments have been operational. Other than the areas in Fukushima that are affected by the nuclear accident, major works have been done. Since the area affected is so vast, the clean-up will take many more months. The city of Ishinomaki, Natori, and Iwanuma still need major cleaning up even 45 days after the disaster.
- Food and supplies as well as medical support have been provided well by the government. The challenge is to provide supplies to people in homes as well as providing specialized goods for the elderly and physically challenged.
- The number of volunteers is abundant but the challenge of organizing and managing the volunteers remains challenging.
EDUCATION:
- School supplies were sent to the affected areas. Most schools are reopened.
- Education cluster in Miyagi was reported by Japan Platform to be running ahead of other clusters.

LIVELIHOOD:
- Many of the victims have lost their livelihood in the form of flooded fields, damaged stores and factories and devastated communities.
- Radiation from the nuclear power plant threatens the livelihood of all farmers, fishermen, and all who are involved in the food and agriculture sector.
- Many lost their homes, their money and all of their possessions.
- The elderly and physically challenged lost their care providers and health support.

PROTECTION:
- Protection of vulnerable groups remain a high concern. Elderly, children, disabled, and special needs population are in desperate need for support as evacuation centers are not equipped to handle and cater their specific needs outside of food, WASH, shelter and education. Many disabled people were reported to return to live in their affected houses just because they are finding it difficult living at evacuation centers. However, this present a new challenge of access to necessary services.
- Gender-based violence and volunteer safety should also be focused. Most evacuation centers are not listing the residents based on gender and age, but a mere total number. Volunteers need to be properly equipped and oriented for safety. These issues can be crucial as another wave of humanitarian disaster may arise if these are not properly addressed.

The people of the Tohoku region (Iwate, Miyagi, & Fukushima) are still a long way from recovering. HOPE worldwide Japan (HWJ) has decided to focus its relief efforts in the areas of Sendai city, Iwanuma City and Natori City and focus on this area on a long term basis.

The rapid assessment team managed to speak with valuable organizations such as CWS, Miyagi Center for Disabled, Association for Aid and Relief Japan, Bond & Justice, Mercy Corps, IMC, JLER, NICCO, Save The Children Japan, Japan Red Cross Society, HOPE International Development Agency, WFP, Japan Platform, UNHCR, Ronald McDonald Foundation, JANIC, IFRC, American Red Cross, World Relief, and AmeriCares. Team also managed to speak with various local government staffs on the ground in the four cities.

Based on the field assessment and speaking to key stakeholders, below are some recommendations for relief, early recovery and long term rebuilding to support the local government and communities:
1) Mobilize volunteers to Iwanuma and Natori to help clean up the debris in people's houses and when available help people move into temporary housing.

2) Provide hot meals for the smaller evacuation centers which are in need.

3) Provide psychosocial activities alongside our hot meals. One would be providing massage therapy for the elderly; others would be playing with the children.

4) Provide a special comfort kit for elderly people that would include medical plasters, warm socks, vitamin pills and other products needed especially by the elderly.

5) Provide volunteer support and management. This would be done by hiring one or two workers for a limited time period, and providing housing for them in the Sendai area. These workers would organize the weekend volunteer teams from HOPE worldwide Japan and offer volunteer management services for other organizations during the week.

6) Provide volunteers, services and support for Tasket, the Miyagi center for disaster relief for the physically challenged. This center provides food and supplies to those who are physically challenged who cannot stay in the evacuation centers and others who need support with recovery. The physically challenged are one of the most vulnerable groups of people in this disaster and their needs are often overlooked. Supplies such as sanitary napkins

7) Invest in a community center that would continue to serve the people that will take at least five years of rebuilding.

For more information and inquiries, please contact:
HOPE worldwide Japan (HWJ)
1-30-17 Tomigaya Shibuya-Ku Tokyo 151-0063 Japan
Tel:(03)3460-4430  website:www.hopewwj.org

Mr. Atsushi Kato, Director
e-mail: kato@hopewwj.org , cell:090-7232-7354

Mr. Yudai Takemoto, Relief Program Coordinator
e-mail:takemoto@hopewwj.org  cell:090-9836-7451