

Press Release: Japanese Red Cross launch ¥30 billion tsunami aid package

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Three months on from the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan's North East coastline, the Japanese Red Cross Society has embarked on a ¥30 billion (309 million Swiss francs, 253 million Euros) aid programme to meet the continuing emergency and longer term recovery needs of more than 90,000 families living in evacuation centres and temporary housing.

The Red Cross remains firmly focused on helping to improve living conditions for many of the 98,000 people remaining in evacuation centres - most of which are situated in the hardest hit prefectures of Miyagi, Fukushima and Iwate. Staff and volunteers are providing a range of services to care for the evacuees and plans are underway to install items such as washing machines, water tanks for hand washing, privacy partitions and TVs.

The physical and mental health of evacuees is a major concern, particularly where people are facing prolonged stays in the centres. Longer term solutions to find more appropriate accommodation for people who have lost their homes are urgently needed. The Red Cross is supporting those families moving into temporary housing units built by the government, helping to restore a sense of normality in their lives. Home appliance kits comprised of items such as a washing machine, rice cooker, fridge, microwave and TV, will be provided to more than 90,000 new homes.

With major damage to health and care services, another priority is to support medical facilities such as hospitals, clinics and care homes. In Ishinomaki, the Red Cross is planning to boost local health services by building and equipping temporary medical facilities. Specially equipped beds are also being donated to existing nursing homes in three prefectures to ease the plight of many elderly people who require special care. The Japanese Red Cross is aiming to purchase 500 vehicles to be used for social welfare activities, enabling carers to reach people who are vulnerable and isolated.

Addressing mental health issues, post traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety amongst survivors is a major concern and the Red Cross is increasing the number of care-givers and psychosocial support teams working in evacuation centres and nursing homes.

Funds raised by Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in over 50 countries will be used to finance the relief and recovery programme. Contributions from local and international donors to the Japanese Red Cross Society national fundraising campaign within Japan are being transferred to prefecture grant disbursement committees. So far, the Japanese Red Cross has contributed ¥82 billion (834 million Swiss francs, 685 million Euros) to the committees, this money is being distributed in the form of cash grants to survivors.

IFRC and Japanese Red Cross President, Tadateru Konoe, thanked donors around the world for their support and solidarity.

“I offer you my heart-felt gratitude for your concern, encouragement and assistance. We have

drawn strength from solidarity. The funds are being used in areas of high urgency where the relief and recovery package provides practical support to improve life and help people take those first steps towards recovery.”

Since March 11th, more than 47,000 staff of the Japanese Red Cross have been directly involved in the humanitarian response. So far the Red Cross (JRCS) has provided emergency medical care, relief and early recovery support to more than 67,000 people.