

# In the Dirt

SPRING 2011

MTW Disaster Response Ministry Newsletter

## DRM IN JAPAN

“HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM.”

In the hours after the earthquake and tsunami hit the northeast coast of Japan on March 11, 2011, MTW Japan missionaries and Disaster Response Ministry (DRM) went into action. The on-site missionaries, located in southeastern Japan in Chiba, Tokyo, felt the impact of the quake and its aftershocks, but were spared traumatic damage. The team leaders ensured their teams and families were safe and immediately began networking with Japanese brothers and sisters to help those affected by the disaster. Together with the Japanese church members and community, they began orchestrating a massive “collect and distribute” relief effort, driving trucks of supplies to the affected areas, averaging two trips per day.

### Iwaki Assessment



*ANAT Team: Dennis Hamilton, Michael Behmer, Dan Jenny*



*Damage in Iwaki*

The DRM assessment team’s first destination in the disaster area was Iwaki City, a city with a population of around 350,000 that received substantial damage from the tsunami. The team was accompanied by Karen Darda and Brent Kooi, two MTW Japan missionaries.



*Christina Davies and Emily Hendrix*



Meanwhile, the DRM “mission control center,” Christina Davies in England, Tom Felmley in Pennsylvania, and Emily Hendrix at the MTW office in Atlanta, also stepped into high gear, working around the clock to dialogue with MTW Japan and coordinate DRM’s response to support the relief efforts of those already on the ground.

En-route to Iwaki, the team stopped at the Domae Church to see if there were any needs. This community was abandoned due to radioactive fallout. The church building was offered to house relief workers, but the building is still quite some distance from the tsunami-affected areas.



*Domae Church*

Once in Iwaki, ANAT visited Pastor Mori-sensei at the Global Mission Church (GMC). The DRM team was impressed with Pastor Mori-sensei and the relief operation he was leading. He is well-connected in the community and knows its needs. His church owns a large three-story building that is being used to sort through donations arriving from throughout Japan. There, the supplies are sorted and re-packed and then sent out to pre-determined areas. Pastor Mori-sensei spent several hours with ANAT members. He brought them to three shelters and introduced them to the mayor of the city. This operation is very well-connected and organized. They have thought ahead to sustainability through their service.



*Tom Felmley*

From March 18-24, 2011, DRM sent an Advance Needs Assessment Team (ANAT) to Japan. Dan Jenny, Dennis Hamilton, and Michael Behmer arrived in Tokyo and began working closely with Dan Iverson, MTW Japan's country director and Bob Drews, MTW missionary. ANAT focused on evaluating MTW Japan's ongoing relief efforts from their base in Chiba, Tokyo, and making two site visits to areas affected by the tsunami in Iwaki and Sendai.

Overall, the response to this disaster has been helped by the fact that Japan is a modern nation with an extensive infrastructure. Relief supplies are getting through. Food, water, and fuel supplies appeared to be increasing even in the short period of time the assessment team was in Japan. Water and electricity quickly began to return; in fact, both were available at all the locations the ANAT members visited. Dan, Dennis, and Michael continually witnessed the amazing work in Japan to organize and provide what the affected regions and people needed.



*Global Church Iwaki*



*Damage in Iwaki*

Pastor Mori took ANAT members to several relief centers operated by the local government. All the government-run relief centers had things in common, such as:

1. Each location had a government representative whom ANAT interviewed through Pastor Mori.
2. All locations appeared to be well organized.
3. While there were shortages of essentials at first, supplies were on the increase thanks to the efforts of the Christian church and local government.
4. Medical care was available and appeared to be serving the immediate needs. The population appeared healthy. No evidence of camp sickness was seen by ANAT or reported by the relief center administration personnel.

The areas with the deepest need have received the most help from the Japanese government, the U.S. government, and the Self-Defense Force.

However, even in the midst of these positive circumstances, the rebuilding of the devastated areas will take years. From our perspective, a plan to respond to this disaster is unique in that the needs change constantly and quickly as a result of Japanese efficiency. It is hard to pick one area with the greatest need because the needs are being met almost as soon as they appear. For example, while the team was with Pastor Mori in Iwaki, he received a phone call and was told that there were six areas in need of specific supplies. The team traveled with the pastor to one of the areas. When they arrived, the needed supplies had already been delivered by another group. (See more on Iwaki below.)

ANAT also determined that regardless of what has been reported in the media, the Japanese people, whether dislocated or not, are receiving adequate care. In addition, each person in a relief center is evaluated by a doctor for symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). From its own observations, the team did not see any part of the population not in good spirits. They witnessed communication, smiling, eating, and sleeping. There were no signs of agitation at any of the locations. This is not the typical response to a large-scale disaster and is unlike what MTW Disaster Response counseling

5. Population of these relief centers continually decreased as families left the relief centers and moved in with relatives throughout the country.

ANAT recommended that Pastor Mori would be a good interface in the Iwaki region for relief activities in the future.



*Damaged street - Iwaki*

## Sendai Assessment



*Damage in Sendai*

The second affected area ANAT visited was the city of Sendai, a city with a population of one million. The team was driven by a Japanese man named Tokyo and MTW missionary Bob Drews. Since this was such a long trip, ANAT was able to interact with Bob Drews for an extended time. First, the team visited OPC Pastor Cal Cummings at his home. While Pastor Cummings was interested in helping, his church has a small presence in the community and he was unsure if others would be able to help. They also had no experience in disaster

has seen in the past, both in third-world countries and in the U.S. following Hurricane Katrina. However, it is important to remember that this disaster is far from over. The nuclear reactors and radiation will continue to increase anxiety as people become worried about this threat they cannot see or identify.

Because of the ongoing strong national response and the uniqueness of this disaster with its rapidly changing needs, ANAT determined that DRM should not send in medical teams. The MTW Japan team needs to be plugged in with people in Japan who have extensive networks, are physically present in the areas they are serving, and who have the ability to monitor changing needs. ANAT was able to make recommendations to the MTW Japan team in this area based on their site visits.

While DRM medical teams are not needed, it was determined that there is a need for counseling training for the MTW Japan staff. First, the local missionaries need to be equipped to counsel their own people. Re-energizing the MTW Japan team and giving them improved skills for self-care and outreach would be a good transition as the relief supply operation eventually winds down. This in-team training could lead them into the second stage of outreach and counseling in the community. MTW Japan's external counseling concerns are not only for the disaster victims, but also for long-term counseling services and training, especially in the areas of

relief. ANAT was able to review damage to their church building and recommend a scope of needed repairs. The repairs, however, would be beyond the scope of a two-week team since they would require heavy equipment to repair.

The second stop in Sendai was at CRASH (Christian Relief, Assistance, Support, and Hope), a cooperative organization that started a relief operation similar to Pastor Mori in Iwaki. They were organized, motivated, adequately staffed, had rapidly built a network to assess the needs of the community, and were partnering with local churches for relief efforts. They seemed like a good fit for MTW to partner with for future efforts.



Finally, the team visited the Samaritan's Purse Relief Center, located in an empty department store. They are a professional relief organization which is well-financed. It was clear they knew exactly what supplies were needed and how to use them effectively. Extensive supplies that had been flown in from the U.S. were available and they had even pre-positioned relief supplies for such an emergency. Samaritan's Purse is also willing to work with

suicide prevention and video game addiction. Michael Behmer was able to help with resources during the ANAT visit and can help oversee training in the future.

## THE NEXT STEPS

The next steps in the process are in the hands of the MTW Japan team, as they will ultimately determine the use of the Minuteman funds collected. One roadblock to a DRM team-based response is the language barrier; another hurdle to any reconstruction efforts will be supplying teams who can build to the strict building codes of Japan. To date, over \$1,000,000 has been collected by MTW for this disaster. As stated above, the relief supply distribution process will soon wind down. The needs of the affected areas are starting to shift to more durable goods, such as clothing. DRM is of course still available as a resource to our missionaries in Japan. Each disaster is different, as you know. For this one, ANAT was privileged to act as eyes and ears not only for DRM, but for the whole of MTW. Thank you all for your prayers and support of this ministry. Please now pray for wisdom for MTW Japan and for the office as we determine the next best steps for the Japan ministry.

CRASH and other organizations. A partnership agreement with them may be a good possibility for relief efforts in Sendai.

## DRT Fall Training



Would you like to help at the next MTW Disaster Response Training? Know someone who is interested in ministering with us? We'd love to see you there! Please [contact us](#) for fall 2011 training information!

For more information about MTW Disaster Response, please email: [Response@mtw.org](mailto:Response@mtw.org) or visit [www.mtw.org](http://www.mtw.org)

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