

# Comprehensive Review of Assistance from Overseas for the Great East Japan Earthquake

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## Abstract

This study organizes and analyzes different forms of assistance provided from overseas for the Great East Japan Earthquake over a one-year term between March 11, 2011 and March 31, 2012. The study surveys both financial and in-kind (material and human resource) forms of assistance received from all countries and regions, international institutions, private entities (NGOs, businesses, private foundations, religious organizations, etc.), and individuals. Still, as it would be impossible to cover all relevant information, the study focuses on major forms of assistance and gives an overall view of overseas support, securing a certain degree of accuracy.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the figures below have been calculated, while eliminating overlap whenever possible, based on published information of organizations such as Japanese government agencies, foreign embassies, the United Nations, the Japanese Red Cross Society, and various NGOs. Possible margins of error include: downward revision due to a small range of overlap, and large-size upward revisions due to information that the study failed to cover and information that was excluded due to the potential for overlap.

The study indicates that the governments, individuals and groups that made financial and/or in-kind contributions belonged to a total of 174 countries and regions. 43 international organizations also offered assistance. Out of the 174 states and regions, 119 were recipients of Japan's ODA, and 35 were among the so-called "Least Developed Countries (LDC)" in Asia and Africa.

Financial Assistance: A total of approximately 164 billion yen in financial assistance was provided by the 174 countries and regions.<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations Office for the

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<sup>1</sup> Since various forms of moral support, including high-level messages, messages from the general public, prayer meetings, and visits to disaster-stricken areas are already summarized on the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), this study excludes such assistance.

<sup>2</sup> This value may require upward revision to around 60 billion yen. Specifically, even in cases where the study has obtained information from donors (for example, "Corporation XX donated YY dollars"), if the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Somalia received the largest amount of humanitarian funding of 868,139,570 US dollars during 2011 (equivalent to 71.3 billion yen at the exchange rate used for this study). The UN announced at the time of disaster that Japan would receive more humanitarian relief from the international community in 2011 than any other country, and it would be safe to say it is accurate based on the figures above. The analysis of donor attributes indicates that governments and international institutions provided 143 cases of financial assistance, whereas non-governmental donors, including Red Cross societies, NGOs, businesses, private foundations, individuals and groups, accounted for 1,250 cases.<sup>3</sup> Regional figures show that the Middle East and North Africa, and North America provided the largest amount at around 30% of the total assistance each. The figures for the Middle East and North African countries are explained by a large amount of assistance provided by governments of oil-producing countries. The Kuwaiti and Qatar governments in particular provided a large amount of assistance, though the total number of cases of relief from this region was relatively low (eighth out of ten regions, including international organizations/ assistance made by entities represented by multiple regions). North America ranked third in terms of the number of cases, with larger per-case amount in comparison with other regions. Europe had the largest number of cases of assistance, while East Asia ranked second (the region ranked third in terms of amount). Most of financial contributions were made by developed countries (i.e. non-ODA recipient countries). However, in terms of the number of cases of assistance, ODA-recipient countries accounted for about 30% of all cases. Financial assistance concentrated in the first three months after the disaster; however, it was provided continuously throughout the year.

Human Resource Cooperation: Japan received human resource cooperation from 99 countries and regions and many international organizations in a total of 160 instances. Among these countries, 61 countries (60% of the total) were Japanese ODA recipients. In terms of the type of group or organization providing the assistance, 77 were governments and international organizations, while 83 belonged to non-governmental donors. In terms of the type of assistance, 19 cases were dispatch of search/rescue teams, 11 were dispatch of medical teams, 63 were various services for the victims, which included volunteer work, 28 were relief coordination (including surveys and studies), 25 were related to international

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recipients could not be confirmed, such information is excluded from the survey. This is to avoid overlapping figures, since the study may have already checked and calculated the recipient information (for example, "YY dollars was received from business/group in country ZZ"). It also excludes cases where assistance is not confirmed as accepted even if it was pledged. The number of countries and regions does not include the information on assistances which does not identify the country to which they belong.

<sup>3</sup> The number of cases given is a rough estimate, since some recipient organizations count all forms of assistance provided by overseas parties as one case, and others count assistance provided from general public including businesses and groups together. The same applies to in-kind contributions.

exchanges through visits to the affected areas or invitations to the affected people to travel overseas, and 14 were related to the nuclear accident. Among the 30 cases of dispatch of search/rescue and medical teams, 26 were implemented by government or international organizations.

Material Contribution: Japan received donations of goods and services from 73 countries and regions in a total of 305 instances. In terms of the type of group or organization providing the assistance, 154 were governments and international organizations, while 151 were other groups. In terms of the type of assistance, 104 cases were food aid, 158 were various relief supplies, 14 were fuel, 39 were provision of services (e.g. communication and transportation), and 34 were nuclear accident-related supplies. Material contribution was more likely to be provided within 11 to 20 days of the disaster, and 50% of the total was provided within 30 days of the disaster. 88% was provided within 50 days of the disaster.<sup>4</sup>

The preceding analysis reveals five key points.

1. Assistance was provided and received across national boundaries—not only through governments and international agencies, but also through private businesses, NGOs, groups, and other organizations. This means that relief efforts involved global civil society as a whole. This trend has been common in recent years when massive disasters occur in developing countries, and it shows that the Great East Japan Earthquake was no exception.
2. Out of 174 countries and regions, 119 were Japanese ODA recipients. In fact, a large amount of assistance was provided from extremely poor countries and countries with unstable political and economic conditions. In recent years, developing countries have joined developed nations in offering assistance for massive disasters. This global trend—a spirit of mutual aid—was shown even when a developed country like Japan was the victim. A number of countries expressed their gratitude for Japan's past assistance, including ODA.
3. A significant portion of in-kind contributions (material and human resource) provided by overseas businesses fully utilized those organizations' field of expertise, distinctive characteristics, and name recognition. Countries also provided assistance that effectively utilized their unique features.
4. Accepting in-kind contributions from overseas is more difficult than accepting those provided domestically, since they require interpretation and other coordination in addition to matching needs. Because of this, not all assistance offered by overseas

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<sup>4</sup> Time periods indicate when assistance reached Japan and not necessarily the affected area(s).

parties was accepted.

5. Unlike compiling data for disaster relief given to developing countries (usually led by the United Nations and other prominent international organizations), there was no mechanism in place for Japan, a developed country, to compile data on assistance provided from overseas countries. Consequently, data were scattered across many organizations and compilation methods varied. This presented an obstacle to compiling and analyzing data in a consistent and unified manner, and brought to light an important area for future improvement.

The lessons from this study can only be fully learned if further studies are carried out on how assistance was and is being used, the actual state of affected areas that received assistance, and how assistance was accepted.