

## Support team efforts (1)

Assessing the level of damage/Relief efforts April 5th – 9th, 2011

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For a period of five days from the 5th to the 9th of April, about a month after the disaster struck, we again visited the disaster site to survey the area, perform stability checks and carry out support efforts. This time we again visited Miyako City as well as stepping foot into Kamaishi City and Ofunato City (all within Iwate Prefecture). We went around the refuge shelters in all the disaster areas, made stability confirmations and handed out supplies to the visually impaired.

### Morioka City, April 5th



We again visited the Iwate Prefecture Government in Morioka City and collected information. Pictured is the vice-president of the Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired, Mr. Miura during an information exchange.

### Back to Miyako City, April 6th



The Miyako City Hall pictured in April (left) and in March (right). Although it lost all of its functionality due to tsunami damage, by the 26th of March they finally had the power back on and the computers were up and running.

### ●State of the Miyako City area



Downtown Miyako City on the 6th of April. Scars left by the disaster could still clearly be seen.



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●The refuge shelters at Miyako City



Members of the Self-Defense Force running a soup kitchen on the grounds of an elementary school.

(Left)  
Speaking with the mother of a visually impaired victim.  
(Right)  
A collection of uncertain-ownership photographs



### Kamaishi City, April 7th

We visited Kamaishi City, the town of steel, on the 7th of April. The town lay in ruins even about a month after the disaster had struck. Information regarding the refuge shelters was unreliable and, judging from the disorder, the damage seemed even worse. The hygiene standards at some refuge shelters were so poor that one would think that the disaster had only just struck. By that time, there had been a lot of volunteers arriving from all over the country.



The harbor took a devastating amount of damage



A beached tanker



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## ● Downtown Kamaishi City



Bottom left) A large number of traffic lights had fallen over.

Bottom right) There were a lot of items being found buried in the rubble, including stuffed toys, personal belongings and items of sentimental value.



## ● Speaking with visually impaired victims

We got information about visually impaired victims at the refuge shelter within the city and made our way to the nearby facility for the disabled, “Kamaishi City Welfare Center for Physically Handicapped People.” There was a visually impaired brother and sister staying at the center. We spoke with them about their lives since the earthquake struck.



The visually impaired brother and sister. The two moved from the highland refuge shelter to the much more familiar welfare center for the disabled. However, the center was not designated as an official refuge shelter and therefore supplies and aid were not available. They were being fed by a nearby refuge shelter but still worried if they would have enough to eat.

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●The widening scope of support



A volunteer dispatch office set up near the train station



The distribution center for supplies



A red cross medical center set up at a refuge shelter in an elementary school



Osaka City on-site headquarters



Donated bicycles sent from Osaka City

## Ofunato City, April 8th

We left the accommodation in Tono City for Ofunato City by car. The power was out for most of Iwate due to a strong aftershock that had hit late the night before. It seemed yet another obstacle for the city trying to make a recovery as quickly as possible.

Highway 45, which runs from the north to the south, marked a drastic change in scenery. The coastal area literally looked like it had been just bombed. Most of the nearby factories had been destroyed. We were at a loss for words when we saw it.



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●The state of damage in Ofunato City



An intellectually handicapped man came to see the damage in the now deserted areas along the coastline. We greeted him and listened to what he had to say.



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### ●Speaking with a visually impaired victim

We spoke with a visually impaired victim and his family who had come from Rikuzentakata City to stay at a refuge shelter set up in the Rias Hall cultural center, which doubles as a library.



When we asked the visually impaired victim about the problems he faced living in the refuge shelter, the very first thing he mentioned was bathing and showering. The Self-Defense Force had installed a camping-use shower and bath. But it had no arm rails. Those with poor eyesight had trouble with the low-light conditions. Bathing times are also limited, making it quite tough for visually impaired victims and the elderly.

We presented these problems to the Health and Welfare Division for the Disabled in the Iwate Prefecture Government the next day. They started to focus more attention to visually impaired victims regarding bathing conditions and also contacted those in charge at other cities.

### ●Refuge shelters within the city



Even the stage was being used as a living space for disaster victims.



An InTouch staff member speaking with refuge shelter personnel



A makeshift water tank