

*This report is produced by OCHA. It was issued by the Regional Office in Asia Pacific with input from the UNDAC team in Tokyo. It covers the period from 17-18 March. The next report will be issued on the 19 March.*

## I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- Number of dead and missing is now 16,600
- Rush to deliver humanitarian aid to evacuees and survivors
- Government introduces emergency plan to address fuel shortage
- World Bank initial loss estimates between US\$15 billion and \$35 billion
- Japan raises nuclear alert level to 5 at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant
- All offers of assistance should be directed to the Government of Japan

## II. Situation Overview

A week ago today, Japan suffered its worst disaster since the second world war, when a powerful earthquake triggered a tsunami that flattened parts of the northeast coastline. The waves that reached 15 metres high in the worst affected area destroyed everything in their path and went six kilometres inland. Today the death toll rose to 6,400 overtaking the official number of dead in the 1995 Kobe earthquake. This number will continue to rise as 10,000 people are missing and many more are still unaccounted for. The disaster also set off a chain of events at the Fukushima Power Plant and a state of emergency remains.

The weather conditions show no sign of improvement but rescue operations continue and another 154 people have been found in the last 24 hours. The Government says more than 16,500 people remain stranded (10,000 in Iwate and 6,500 in Miyagi) but more than 100 helicopters have been mobilized by the Self Defence Force and police and the coast guard for search and rescue missions. To date 26,000 survivors have been found.

While rescue operations continue, vital infrastructure is gradually being restored. At the same time a massive cleanup effort is required to remove a vast amount of debris. Damaged roads, airports and ports are being gradually repaired with the Tohoku Expressway and the Sendai Airport, which was formally submerged, open to emergency vehicles, airplanes and helicopters.

The number of people in evacuation centres has decreased to about 390,000 people from 430,000 reported yesterday according to Government figures. The media is reporting that Japanese authorities are battling to get desperately needed aid to the people in the evacuation centres. The conditions in the evacuation centers appear to be worsening due to the lack of food, water and medicine, medical staff and heating. Of particular concern are the elderly. A quarter of Japan's population is over 65 and already there are reports that 29 elderly people have died in evacuation centres as a result of being moved and due to the lack of medical supplies.

There are media reports that hospitals in the affected areas are unable to function due to the lack of medicines, fuel and water. The media says the lack of electricity and poor communications is preventing them from getting additional support. Some hospitals say that without urgent assistance they will not be able to treat patients. There has been a decrease in the number of households without electricity. Currently 373,748 households, almost one million people, are without power compared to yesterday when the number



was 451,786 households. However, access to water continues to be a problem for 1.8 million households (4.4 million people) across 12 prefectures.

Logistics is proving to be the biggest challenge at this stage of the emergency. The authorities have mobilized a large amount of aid but are unable to get it to the people quickly enough. This is mostly a result of the fuel shortages due to a breakdown of six out of nine oil factories in Kanto and Tohoku areas, and a lack of transport vehicles. In the three worst-affected prefectures, Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima, only 4.7 percent of petrol stations supplies are for non-emergency vehicles. 700 additional large tankers are being mobilized in order to deliver fuel to petrol stations in the affected areas.

In Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture, some shops are reopening to provide food to residents, while convenience stores in Tome, Miyagi have also resumed business due to restored electricity supply.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs says 400 foreigners are reported missing by their Embassies in relation to the earthquake and tsunami. An estimated 48,000 foreign nationals are currently registered as living in disaster-stricken Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima, Yamagata, Akita and Aomori prefectures. Many are Chinese, and some are from Australia and South America.

### **Fukushima Nuclear Plant**

Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency has raised the alert level at the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant from four to five on a seven-point international scale for atomic accidents. Today, Japanese officials continued to drop and spray water from helicopters and trucks onto Unit 3 at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. An emergency diesel generator also started powering water injection into the ponds. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plants remains very serious.

The World Meteorological Organization has activated its Environmental Emergency Response mechanism and is providing the IAEA with meteorological information as per the Joint Radiation Emergency Management Plan of the International Organization. Meteorologists are working with IAEA and WHO. WMO's Regional Specialized Meteorological centres in Beijing, Tokyo and Obninsk are closely monitoring the situation. These centres are responsible for developing predictions of the trajectories and spreading of contaminants following environmental accidents with cross-border implications.

## **III. Government Response**

The Government has created a task force for livelihood support for the affected population. The task force will coordinate ministries, municipalities, private sector and other organizations. Its responsibilities include: ensuring aid reaches isolated evacuation centres, transportation of relief items to affected areas, rehabilitation of essential utilities, construction of temporary shelters, waste disposal, recovery of bodies and burial.

### **Logistics**

The Government is urgently trying to address the fuel shortage using sea, land and Self Defence Force transport. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) announced an emergency response to the fuel shortage in the affected areas. The plan is to redirect 38,000 kilolitres per day of fuel from the oil refinery factories in Hokkaido and western Japan by surface transportation. 38,000 kilolitres was the average per day demand of fuel in the Tohoku area before the disaster. METI is planning to transfer 300 tanker vehicles operating in western Japan to the Tohoku area, and 100 out of 500 fuel stations will supply emergency vehicles carrying relief items with petrol. It has also requested the oil refinery industry increase their production from the current level of 80% capacity to 95% capacity.

According to the media, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) announced that most (94%) of the main roads reaching to the affected Pacific coastal areas have been repaired. Two main highways are still reserved for emergency vehicles only. Six sea ports which were damaged by the earthquake and tsunami have resumed their operations. 13 airports in the affected areas are open for scheduled and chartered flights, and Sendai Airport which was heavily affected by the tsunami is open for humanitarian flights.

### **Shelter**

The municipalities of 27 prefectures across the country are preparing temporary shelters for the evacuees from the disaster affected areas. As of the 17 March, 15,000 people have moved to 27 prefectures. The

receiving prefectures will make available approximately 6,700 municipal houses/apartments with basic facilities.

### Food

According to the Emergency Disaster Response Headquarters in the Office of the Prime Minister, 1.7 meals have been delivered to evacuation centres and hospitals in the affected areas.

### Health

The Government of Japan is preparing to receive medical help from overseas for the thousands injured by the earthquake and tsunami. Although it is illegal for doctors without Japanese medical licenses to practice, the Health Ministry has sent a notice to local governments in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures saying minor procedures may be taken by foreign doctors, given the unprecedented catastrophe. The Government has received offers from countries looking to assist Japan in the medical field.

### National NGOs

Several Japanese NGOs are working in the northern region of Japan, bringing assistance to those in need. Some of them work through Japan Platform, an established emergency humanitarian aid NGO, working as umbrella agency for Japanese NGOs supporting refugees and disasters worldwide. More Japanese NGOs are preparing to reach the affected area.

## IV. International Assistance

### NGO and Relief Supplies

The Government of Japan has made public its position on international donations of relief items and on international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in Japan be made public. With regard to relief items, *“the Government of Japan has received offers for relief goods/material from many countries, international organizations, NGOs and private sector. The Government is identifying the needs and establishing a mechanism for storage and transportation to affected people. Therefore, it is recommended not to send any relief goods without coordination with the Government and local governments”*.

Concerning NGOs, the Government of Japan says *“Search and Rescue operation phase still continues in the affected areas at this moment and the access to those areas is strictly limited to rescue workers. It is also reported that there is temporary shortage of petrol in the affected area. International/foreign NGOs are recommended to wait until the situation improves so that those NGOs are able to conduct their activities in a self-sustainable way”*.

Search and rescue teams are continuing their activities in cooperation with their Japanese counterparts with the focus now on recovery. There are 543 International Search and Rescue specialists (14 teams) from 12 countries currently working. All rescue teams are working outside the 80 km exclusion zone around the Fukushima Power Plant.

Indonesia Aid, an NGO Consortium lead by Dompot Dhuafa has been working in Sendai since the 12 March and is helping the Indonesian Embassy to evacuate its citizens, mostly students, as well as distributing blankets, foods, drinks, milk, gas burners, gas cylinders, heaters, kerosene, gasoline, and generators in Miyagi Prefecture.

India is sending a 50 person team including medical personnel to assist in the recovery effort. The EU is dispatching an advance team from the MIC for the coordination of European assistance.

## V. Coordination

The Government of Japan's Emergency Management agencies are leading the response through the Emergency Response Team, headed by Prime Minister Naoto Kan. Information from the Government of Japan, including situation reports can be found at <http://www.kantei.go.jp>.

The Government of Japan has created a “Volunteers Coordination Unit” under the Chief Cabinet Secretary's Office. The unit is coordinating the activities of volunteer groups and Non Profit Organizations in consultation with relevant ministries.

An UNDAC team, based at JICA Tokyo International Centre is supporting the Government with information management and supporting the International USAR teams. Regular updates on USAR teams are posted on the Virtual OSOCC.

Crisis Commons has put together a Japan Data Profile wiki containing various data sources relevant to the Japan earthquake and tsunami response: [http://wiki.crisiscommons.org/wiki/Japan\\_Data\\_Profile](http://wiki.crisiscommons.org/wiki/Japan_Data_Profile).

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is posting official updates on the nuclear power plants: <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/tsunamiupdate01.html>. The World Health Organisation has information on its website regarding radiation-related health risks: <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/jpn/faqs/en/index.html>.

**Key sites for obtaining official national meteorological information include:**

**Japan:** Japan Meteorological Agency: <http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html>

**China:** China Meteorological Administration: <http://www.cma.gov.cn/>

**Russia:** Russian Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring: <http://www.meteorf.ru/default.aspx>

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