

JCIE REPORT

Strengthening US-Japan NGO Partnerships on Humanitarian Responses Lessons from 3/11

Executive Summary

Hundreds of Japanese and overseas organizations teamed up to respond to Japan's 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown, and their work together demonstrates the tremendous potential of deeper cooperation between Western and Japanese NGOs involved in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. Drawing on two years of interviews with scores of NGO leaders involved in the 3/11 response, a JCIE report assesses how well these NGO's international partnerships actually worked and what needs to be done to ensure they can collaborate effectively the next time disaster strikes around the world.

In fact, the track record of Japanese and US NGOs in responding to 3/11 shows that fulfilling the potential for deeper cooperation will require adjustments on both sides. Groups partnering in response to 3/11 found that significant gaps in expectations, operating methods, and institutional capacity made their work together more difficult—even while their partnerships ended up contributing significantly to the recovery. Based on their experiences, JCIE's report proposes nine measures to strengthen US-Japan NGO partnerships on future humanitarian responses.



Deepen mutual understanding between Japanese and American NGOs

- 1) **Strengthen personal networks linking Japanese and US humanitarian NGOs** by strategically funding the participation of Japanese NGO staff in international conferences on humanitarian issues.
- 2) **Support innovative personnel exchanges** between Japanese and US NGOs that allow staff to build up ties that can later be drawn upon when there is an opportunity to partner.
- 3) **Fund joint studies by US and Japanese NGOs** that compile lessons from 3/11, including on humanitarian emergencies in developed countries and radiological emergencies. By learning together, NGO specialists develop trust and stronger ties.

Strengthen institutional capacity for cooperation

- 4) **Launch consultations on hiring and staff retention policies** between Japanese NGOs and government officials to deal with the brain drain of NGO staff to government and UN agencies, which exacerbates the understaffing of Japanese NGOs.
- 5) **Support capacity building for Japanese humanitarian NGOs** by mobilizing more institutional funding and by providing technical training in cooperation with US NGOs that have pioneered techniques for humanitarian responses.
- 6) **Better align communications approaches** among US and Japanese NGOs to strengthen communications with donors and to avoid the common mismatches in which the Japanese side feels that American partners take more than equal credit for joint accomplishments.

Create a more supportive environment for US-Japan partnerships

- 7) **Make encouraging partnerships a priority** by having governments and funders more clearly articulate the role of NGO cooperation in US-Japan alliance cooperation.
- 8) **Modify restrictions on government funding** so that Japanese funding can be used for joint activities undertaken in partnership with overseas NGOs. This includes changing regulations to allow indirect costs to be covered by government funds.
- 9) **Create a US-Japan Partnership Fund** that supports joint NGO efforts on humanitarian assistance and development issues (recognizing that the NGOs responding to humanitarian emergencies are usually the same ones that work on overseas development). Have each government allocate \$10–\$15 million for joint projects that will incubate partnerships that can be mobilized for major emergencies.

To learn more or to read the full report, visit:
bit.ly/jcie-311ngopartnership

For more information, please contact:
James Gannon, Executive Director, JCIE/USA
TEL: 212-679-4130 | jgannon@jcie.org