

## **2014 Activity Report (March 2014 - March 2015)**

It has been four years since the Great East Japan Earthquake struck Tohoku. People in the disaster-affected three prefectures in Tohoku have started moving from temporary houses to their new homes.

Reclaiming life is not easy, however; let alone rebuilding the community. In a small village in Iwate prefecture where APRICOT has been involved, misunderstandings and conflicts of the past are acting out in the current time of intense communal actions. In Fukushima, on the other hand, where residents continue to live in the fear of low dose radioactive exposure, mothers of young children find it more difficult now to discuss nuclear power plant related issues. Despite the solidarity they seek, they feel there are growing and uncomfortable diversities among them. The fatigue is felt not only among the affected families, but also among the aid workers. Every time we visit Tohoku, we are forced to think how best we can support them from outside.

Through this report, we would like to share with you the activities implemented between March 2014 and March 2015 as well as the result of fundraising in the same period.

In this reporting year, APRICOT raised funds from multiple sources. We, for example, received donations of 617,994 JPY from individual supporters through our own events. We also received a donation of 1,500,000 JPY raised through a special event organized by the Belgium Embassy. His Excellency the Ambassador of Belgium and his wife kindly hosted this event for the sole purpose of raising funds to support the mission of APRICOT. His Excellency's call for support mobilized many individuals and organisations. The great logistical support by the Embassy staff before and during the event was indispensable to the success of this event, too. Words are not enough to convey our gratitude, but we still want to send a big THANK YOU to the His Excellency, his wife, and the whole staff of the Belgium Embassy.

The total income this year amounted to 2,128,011 JPY (including interest), which is five-fold from that of the previous fiscal year. It is also worth mentioning that we received donations from individuals living abroad. We thank you sincerely for all your kind contributions to the lives of disaster-affected people in Tohoku.

This reporting year, **the total of 800,000 JPY** was distributed to organisations providing mental health care in disaster-affected areas. Please read the information below for more detail. We will soon be making decisions on the use of the 1,500,000 JPY, which will be reported next year.

Last but not least, we are proud to inform you that APRICOT became a Non Profit Organisation (NPO) on October 21, 2014. APRICOT, born at the end of 2012 as a group of individual volunteers, has entered a new phase of its existence as an NPO approved and registered by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The award of NPO status is a recognition of our shared sense of mission and commitment. We thank you again for your continuous support for APRICOT.

### **August 2-3, 2014: APRICOT EVENT: ASEAN Festival**

APRICOT organised a joint face painting event with "Photo Tohoku," a group that has been capturing the images of the families that were affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Under the blazing sun in midsummer in Yoyogi Park, we entertained many children with face painting for 2 days. We raised 26,000 JPY in this event.

### **August 7-11, 2014: "Mission Rose," Summer Support Event**

The members of APRICOT participated in "Mission Rose" again this year. Mission Rose is a mental health care support initiative in Tanohata Village, Iwate Prefecture. APRICOT's contribution was to give a lecture to the counselors at the health center. We also joined the local team to visit those who had left the temporary housing as well as those who were still living in the temporary housing to gauge their stress level.

### **September 24 - 25, 2014: Stress Relief Class & Parent/Child Play · Parent Meeting**

Working with the Date City Health Center in Fukushima Prefecture, APRICOT participated in the family support event that was hosted by "The Heartful Family Care Society" (Japanese name Heartful Heart: Association to Nurture the Future.) Under the title, "Come and Have Some Tea!" a stress relief class was organised. APRICOT members introduced relaxation techniques to the participants who included many elderly individuals. We also spend some time with them to listen to their health concerns. We aimed to relieve the psychological burden caused by the fear of radiation exposure, the separation from their families, and being displaced from their home. It was a learning opportunity for APRICOT members as well.

"Parent/Child Play" took place on September 25th, 2014 at the Date Central Social Hall. A public health nurse facilitated the play session for parent-child pairs. In parallel, the team of clinical psychologists facilitated a peer meeting among parents. APRICOT members enjoyed being part of the event along with the participants and local professionals.

### **October 30 - November 4, 2014: "Mission Rose," Autumn Support Event**

Members of APRICOT once again participated in the "Mission Rose." The signature activity of distributing roses to every household in the village was to be completed finally! APRICOT members and psychology students from Tokyo visited each and every family with a stem of rose and listened to the villagers' stories. Members also helped conduct a training workshop for volunteers who were providing psychosocial support in the temporary housing community.

### **February 25-26, 2015: Minamisoma Parent/Child Play • Parent Meeting**

Prior to the actual event, we had a briefing meeting at the office of Heartful Family Care Society in Koriyama on February 25th. After the meeting, we drove through Iitate Village where we could see piles of black trash bags that contained radioactive waste, to reach Minamisoma to spend the night. On February 26th, we participated in the "Parent/ Child Play" Event facilitated by the public health nurse and other health outreach workers of Minamisoma City Health Center. This city is a shelter to many refugees from Futaba town and Namie town where the highest level of radiation had been detected. Naturally, heated discussion took place on the public policy as well as individuals' efforts to mitigate the impact of radiation. This event reminded APRICOT members of the continuing levels of fear and the needs for further support.

### **March 8, 2015: "Marché de l'Apricot" at Belgium Embassy**

The special event, "Marché de l'Apricot", organized with the support of His Excellency the Ambassador was a great success! The event was kicked off by an opening speech of His Excellency and our director, Andrew. It brought an astonishing 900 people to the Embassy to purchase Belgian beer and chocolate to support Tohoku. APRICOT members directly raised 32,000 JPY at this event by selling donated children's clothes and giving face paint to the

guests. The biggest contribution, however, came from participating organisations, which amounted to 1,500,000 JPY!

## **Recipients of APRICOT funds in this reporting year**

### **NPO Heartful Family Care Society (Japanese name: Heartful Heart: Association to Nurture the Future) – 300,000 JPY**

This NPO was established by the former chairman of the Fukushima Clinical Psychiatrist Association, Ms. Narui, who has been working tirelessly for the children of Fukushima since the disaster. This NPO specialises in local hands-on support activities for the affected children and their families. Please note that this is a separate organisation from the advocacy and research NPO established by Ms. Narui two years ago (NPO: Fukushima's Children's Emotion and Future Care).

This organisation supports affected children and families by hosting "Parent/Child Play and Parent Meeting," dispatching an expert team to care for residents' emotional issues upon requests from communities, and by conducting "Wellness Enhancement/Spirit Improvement Project." The latter project aims to provide the holistic approach to physical and mental health care to children who are exposed to low-dose radiation.

APRICOT members participated in these events in Date City and Minamisoma City. We are acutely aware that nuclear material disposal issues remain unsolved in Fukushima and that people are experiencing new threats every day. Long-term support is needed!

### **Team "Mission Rose" – 500,000 JPY**

This is a group of psychology students organised by Professor Makoto Kuroiwa of Meisei University in the aftermath of the great earthquake to support the people of Tanohata village in Iwate Prefecture. It got its name from its very

first activity in which students accompanied public health nurses to visit each family with a stem of rose. Today, the group shifted its focus to work with the village health center to host a lecture on mental health and to provide support to local counselors each summer. As the distribution of roses throughout the village became difficult, this year, they made visits in summer and fall to complete the activity. We learned a lot from these visits: Those who moved out of the temporary housing were busy making new communities. We believe that the existence of a healthy, stable and functional family is a prerequisite for children's healthy development. Yet direct psychological intervention at individual and household level is not something that is readily accepted by the villagers. We, therefore, find it very important to enhance the capacity of public nurses and other local resource persons who are trusted by the local people. It is probably the most effective shortcut to provide much needed psychological support to the affected population.

We welcome your questions, ideas and opinions of APRICOT's activity report for 2014. We look forward to communicating with you again for the achievements of the Year 2015-2016.