

## Activity Report (between April 2015 and March 2016)

It has been 5 years already since the Great East Japan Earthquake hit Tohoku. In the affected communities, individuals have taken their steps to rebuild their lives. New challenges are emerging, however, as time goes by. In Iwate prefecture, majority of the affected population has moved out of the temporary homes. They are now finding more differences than similarities among themselves, which makes communal actions more challenging. In Fukushima, on the other hand, where the threat of the low-dose radiation exposure continues, the mental health team has launched a new program for the children to be “radiation-aware.” The emergency projects are now being transformed into longer-term developmental project.

We are happy to report on the activities between March 2015 and March 2016, as well as the funds donated to APRICOT in the past 12 months.

We have received a total of 601,632 yen, of which 22,000 yen was raised in an event, and 579,632 (including the interests) yen was donated. We would like to thank you sincerely for your support. It was particularly a hard year for APRICOT as some of the staff members faced health issues. We are, however, looking forward to the new fiscal year with refreshed energy.

We sent donations from this year and the remaining amount from the Belgium Embassy fundraiser to the local organisations that run the mental health programs in Tohoku. All the funded activities are in line with the visions and missions of APRICOT.

APRICOT will continue its efforts to support the children and their families of Tohoku. We hope to report back more on the reality of the affected people, too. We thank you again sincerely for your continuous support.

### **April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016: Food Fair 2015 at Saint Maul International School**

The face painting team of APRICOT was present once again at the Food Fair 2015 of Saint Maul International School in Yokohama. This was the second year that we participated in this event. Not only the staff member who is an alumnus of the school, but also APRICOT’s mascot dog, Pooka, took part in this event to give face painting to the children, who, in turn, donated 22,000 yen for the cause of APRICOT.

### **August 17 - 23, 2016: Operation Rose Summer Edition**

This year, too, APRICOT members participated in the Operation Rose in Tanohata village in Iwate Prefecture. With the collaboration of the health center, we carried out a seminar on the suicide prevention. We also conducted the mental health checkup in two community halls in Raga and Shimanokoshi, where we tested the stress level of all villagers. We took advantage of the occasion and introduced easy exercises to maintain mental health to adults, while children enjoyed the street performances. This was a great opportunity to hear the real voice of the affected people.

### **February 24–25, 2016: Child–Parent Play, Parent meeting**

Dr. Douglas Walker, a trauma therapy specialist in the USA who is a survivor of the Hurricane Katrina himself visited Japan in early 2016. He was interested in the mental health work done in Fukushima. APRICOT members, therefore, accompanied him in his visits to the projects in Fukushima. The first day coincided with the national common university entrance exam, and Fukushima was full of young

people. With that image in our mind, we met Dr. Narui from the Heartful Family Care Associations the following day, to participate in the child-parent play in Date City organised by the public health nurse. In the afternoon, we changed the venue to Reisan, where we participated in an event called “come and have some tea,” together with a local organisation that promotes physical exercises among the disaster affected people. Many stories were shared: A participant shared the bitter memory of social divide caused by the indemnification issues. Another did not hide his distrust of the government. Still another told the story of family separation after the disaster. As he listened to these vivid memories of the disaster, Dr. Walker shared his own feeling of guilt that he carried for months after the Hurricane Katrina for having had his house intact when many of his neighbors lost theirs. It was a precious moment in which the survivors of different disasters in different countries felt solidarity.

## THE LOCAL ORGANISATIONS WHO RECEIVED FUNDS FROM APRICOT IN 2015

### *NPO Heartful Family Care Association* 500,000 yen

It is an NPO founded by the former President of the Clinical Psychologist Association in Fukushima, Dr. Narui, to support the children in Fukushima. Its projects include “Child-Parent Play” run by the public health nurses with the technical support from the clinical psychologists from Tokyo, “come and have some tea,” the mental health team dispatch on the request of the local authority, as well as the health promotion activities to monitor both physical and mental aspects of children’s health. These great contributions are not achieved for nothing. The NPO’s biggest challenge at this point is the fatigue among the staff members. APRICOT members visit them once or twice a year to support, but that is not enough. With no clear prospects on the nuclear waste disposal issue, these activities need to continue for the foreseeable future. For that, we need to address the staff issues.

### *”Operation Rose”* :500,000 yen

It is a group of volunteer psychology students led by Prof. Kuroiwa of Meisei University. It started its activity in the summer after the disaster by distributing a stem of rose to each and every household in Tanohata village in Iwate Prefecture. Five years on, its activity expanded to host a seminar on mental health in general and suicide prevention in particular. They no longer distribute roses to all households, but only to those who came to their events. They hear some heartwarming news, however, that the participants planted roses in their new home. Despite its high suicidal rate even before the disaster, Tohoku still struggles to make the mental health services accepted by its residents. Under these circumstances, public health nurses and village social workers are vital interface with people to monitor their psychological status. The group is focusing its efforts to provide these non-psychological professionals with technical and moral support.

### *Rainbow Rose* :100,000 yen

It is a group formed by the students who participated in the Operation Rose. They found their role in visiting the local people; just like their children, ground children or older siblings living elsewhere would. The students pride in providing a special entertainment each time. This year, they practiced one of the traditional street performances to spin plates on a stick. Their performance was very well received by all the people regardless of the age group.

If you have any question about our activities in 2015, please do not hesitate to ask. We look forward to sending you a new report on the activities of 2016 again in a year time.