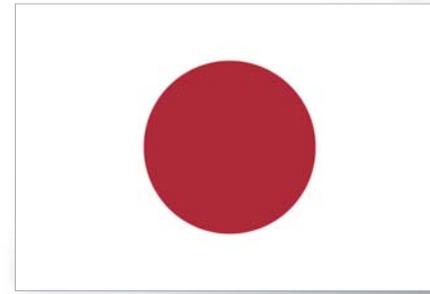


Friends — we thank you!



ありがとう、ともだち。

Japan and the people of Tohoku continue to smile  
thanks to Operation Tomodachi.

## Message from Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda

On March 11, 2011, one of the largest earthquakes in recorded history struck Japan, causing an enormous tsunami and inflicting untold damage along the coastline of northeastern Tohoku. Faced with such a crisis and with the despair and suffering that followed in its wake, we were blessed to have friends who would reach out across international borders to provide support, encouragement and kindness.

We will not forget the tireless efforts of the members of U.S. Forces in the disaster-affected regions, working with dignity and compassion in the search for missing people, bringing with them food and fuel that were in such short supply, and joining together with local residents to restore vital facilities.

We will not forget the U.S. officials, diplomats and other professionals who – as if responding to a crisis in their own country – provided dedicated assistance to Japan, offering expert opinions and valuable insights on a 24-hour, round-the-clock basis.

We will not forget the sincere goodwill that spread from the grassroots of communities all over the United States, as people offered their prayers, encouragement and support for the areas that had been struck by the disaster.

This booklet has been compiled as a token of gratitude for our *tomodachi* (friends) across the Pacific Ocean, to offer a heartfelt *arigato* (thank you) from the people of Japan to the people of the United States. Operation Tomodachi will remain in our collective memories and stands as an embodiment of the firm and unwavering bonds our two countries share. It is my hope that this small gesture of gratitude will help to show that with the support and encouragement that has been given by the United States, smiles are once again returning to Japan.

I hope that this token of our gratitude may help to sow new seeds of friendship and goodwill among future generations, and that the friendly relations between our two countries will continue to go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely,

Yoshihiko Noda  
Prime Minister of Japan

April 2012

# Operation TOMODACHI

## Thanks for your support



ARIGATO



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"ARIGATO" - The "Thank You" message written by the woods on the beach in the Tohoku region

Yokota Air Base



ARIGATO



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## Smiling faces of Tohoku



### Another Help from the United States

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) dispatched Urban Search and Rescue Team from Fairfax County, Virginia and Los Angeles County, California immediately after the disaster. They made great contributions to recovering smiles in Tohoku by engaging in search and rescue in Ofunato and Kamaishi Cities.

First North America Division, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



ARIGATO



**New Life in Fukushima**

October 15, Hirata Village

A baby born in the same year as the earthquake disaster. As both parents are teachers they are continuing to live in Fukushima and did not evacuate. With a small baby to look after there are many things to attend to each day, but with lots of love the baby is growing strong and healthy.

R.S



ARIGATO



**Baby Massage in Temporary Accommodation**

January 12, Ishinomaki City

The meeting room in the temporary accommodation facility is freezing cold in winter, so much so that the massage oil that a massage therapist from Miyazaki brought with her was almost frozen. The room was heated up and the babies' bottom halves were undressed. This is part of a mind and body post-disaster care program for parents and children from maternity to pre-school age. By interacting and exercising the participants feel refreshed and enjoy themselves too.

Babysmile Ishinomaki



ARIGATO



**We Will Take on the Task**

January 14, Higashi Matsushima City

Almost all homes in the Tsukihama district of Miyato were washed away in the tsunami. This district is home to a traditional ceremony that has been passed down for more than 200 years. Known as the “Enzu-no-wari,” it is a ritual performed at the lunar new year to pray for abundant crops and is an Important Intangible Cultural Property of Japan. Every year from January 11 to 16, local elementary and junior high school children live together in a grotto under a shrine. As there were no junior high school students in the district this year, only these three elementary school students took on the task.

Public Affairs Section, General Affairs Division, HigashiMatsushima



ARIGATO



**The Joy of “Roast Sweet Potatoes for Reconstruction”**

January 27, Kamaishi City

A just-out-the-oven sweet potato appears.

“This is just the right season for sweet potatoes,” says the mother of the small children who concentrate on cooling the potato down by blowing on it.

“Quickly!” says the mother, “I’m going to burn my hands.”

IWATE YUICCO Hanamaki



ARIGATO



**Decontamination Continues**

July 1, Fukushima City

Dried grass and fallen leaves are removed even from general roads far away from the city center for decontamination purposes. Based on model programs, Fukushima Prefecture creates leaflets on decontamination methods and is carrying out the decontamination work within the prefecture.

Public Affairs Division, Fukushima Prefecture



ARIGATO



**Sakura Trees for Telling the Story to Future Generations**

November 6, Rikuzentakata City

Sakura Line 311 project. The young people in the community have gotten together to ask for the support of Japan to plant cherry blossom trees along the incline where the tsunami reached on March 11 and to tell future generations the massive tsunami that took many lives. On this day, more than 20 cherry blossom trees sent from Matsuda, Kanagawa Prefecture were planted. The community members, joined by participants from Kanagawa, planted the trees of requiem, think about their dreams for the future.

Rikuzentakata City Reconstruction Support Center,  
National Youth Mayors' Association



ARIGATO



**Planting Flowers Together**

December 20, Rikuzentakata City

A flower garden brings smiles to Rikuzentakata! ‘Volunteer members from Keppare Tohoku’ gathered from across Japan!

In an area where houses were washed away with the tsunami, a rainbow of viola flowers and participants together reach the blue sky!

Hitoshi Imai, Iwate Kenpoku Tourism



ARIGATO



**Gifts from Kyushu**

May 26, 2011 Higashi-Matsushima City

A whole bunch of delicious Japanese mikans (mandarin orange) arrived from Kyushu. They were sweet and big. Thank you for sending them from so far away. We enjoyed them very much!

Omagari Elementary School



ARIGATO



### Compassion Conveyed Through Apples

December 5, Noda Village

Third year students from Hirosaki City Higashimeya Junior High School and their parents and guardians visited and kindly gave out “apples for recovery” to the students of Noda Junior High School. Each and every apple had a picture with a message expressing a wish for the recovery of Noda Village. Apparently, if letters or drawings are sealed onto an apple and the sunlight is blocked out, just the covered areas do not turn red and a pattern is created!

Noda Junior High School



ARIGATO



### Chatting over Footbaths Continues

January, Shichigahama Town

Footbaths at the meeting place of a temporary housing unit.

“Even if I am laughing here, I become sad when I am by myself. I believe that’s true with everyone here.”

“I lived in Minatohama, the smallest beach in Shichigahama Town, and everything was washed away by the tsunami. I have made friends from different beaches at the meeting place.”

Everyone shares with us their loneliness, concerns, and worries.

Rescue Stock Yard



ARIGATO



**Helping Each Other Out**

February 1, Miyako City

Students from Miyakonishi Junior High School who visited the temporary housing unit in Nishigaoka district.

Many students helped shovel the snow in the narrow spaces between the houses. In addition to Miyako Technical High School and Miyakonishi Junior High School, students from Sakiyama Junior High School and Second Junior High School also helped out. We hope to continue to receive everyone's help!

Miyako Livelihood Reconstruction Support Center



ARIGATO



**Out to Sea Once More**

November 12, Kamaishi City

At the Hakozaki Fishing Port, which remains strewn with broken levees, there was a launching ceremony for the new vessel Dai-nana Hakozaki Maru. The ceremony marked the first time the vessel had touched water, and there was a celebration for its completion. "We want all the volunteers to come down to the ceremony too!" We were invited to participate alongside the city residents. The vessel was decorated with many colorful fishing flags.

Tono Magokoro Net



ARIGATO



### The Shichinoichi March

November 27, Shichigahama Town

Making signboards for temporary shops

Progress continues in Shichigahama Town, Miyagi Prefecture on the construction of temporary shops for seven businesses washed away by the tsunami, including a fish shop, produce shop, cafeteria, and flower shop. The area has been nicknamed "Shichinoichi Shopping Street."

More than 50 people, including volunteers, local junior high school students, and others from small children to adults helped out with the creation of signboards for the shops.

Rescue Stock Yard



ARIGATO



### A Revived Fish Market

December 7, Noda Village

The new Noda Fish Market was completed in December.

A Shinto purification ceremony was held on the day of the opening, with mainly villagers involved in the fishing industry participating. Seven chief priests from the Kuji Office of the Iwate Prefecture Association of Shinto Shrines purified the area by offering prayers for the repose of those who passed away in the Great East Japan Earthquake and for reconstruction.

Noda Village Tourism Association



ARIGATO



**Our Shopping Street is Open for Business!**

December 17, Otsuchi Town

A temporary shopping street, “Fukkou Kirari Shopping Street” has been opened on the grounds of Otsuchi North Elementary School, which was destroyed in the disaster. A rice cake throwing ceremony was held in celebration of this. The shopping street contains a supermarket, hair salon, yakitori restaurant, ramen restaurant, and other shops. It also contains a Japanese-style bar, and some locals were heard joyfully saying that they had been drinking there before the opening of the street.

There has not been a place like this in the town for 10 months.

Rescue Stock Yard



ARIGATO



**Smiling for the First Time in a Great While**

April 18, 2011 Kamaishi City

A feast for the viewing of cherry trees at night.

Shinpei Kikuchi, photographer



ARIGATO



**Let the Drums Beat Once More**

June 12, Kamaishi City

The Oubu Taiko Group. All of the taiko drums were washed away in the tsunami. The drums were found and gathered again to drum the beat of reconstruction.

Shinpei Kikuchi, photographer



ARIGATO



**Moving Forward with Determination, No Matter What**

October 16, Kamaishi City

A mikoshi shrine is carried in front of a large, grounded fishing vessel at the Kamaishi Ozaki Shrine Festival.

Shinpei Kikuchi, photographer



ARIGATO



### We'll Light Up This Town Once More

December 13, Minamisanriku Town

A 6m-high Christmas tree.

The tree is located in a space originally occupied by a construction company. The location is a hill with a good view. The tree was set here to allow everyone in the town to see it clearly, and it fills this place that was completely washed away by the tsunami with a warm light.

Here we face the backs of a parent and child looking up toward the tree, wishing for a bright future.

The Social Action Collective United Earth



ARIGATO



### Praying with Intense Concentration

January 7, Ishinomaki City

The first hadaka-mairi (naked shrine visit) since the earthquake.

Just as these individuals at Ohshima Shrine clasp their hands in front of the pyre and pray for reconstruction, completing their hadaka-mairi without giving up because of the cold, we hope to take one step after another toward reconstruction.

Ishinomaki Disaster Recovery Assistance Council Inc.



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**Calligraphy Team Brushes up Tohoku!**

March 25, Ishinomaki City

A calligraphy team from Mishima High School in Ehime unscrolled a large paper and performed in Ishinomaki on March 25. They chose this neighborhood known for its inkstones because of the connection with their craft.

Ishinomaki Disaster Recovery Assistance Council



ARIGATO



**Y'all Come!**

March 18, Ishinomaki City

It's been a year since the disaster. In downtown Ishinomaki's shopping district the stores are gradually returning. Volunteers and shop owners pose for a photo. We're back in business - y'all come!

On The Road



ARIGATO