

## REPORT FROM SUBUD JAPAN

Arisa Ooi, vice Committee Councillor, 30 May 2011

### OUR CHAIR'S TRIP TO SENDAI:



On April 29th and 30th, our chair, Masayuki Nagamine, visited the Sendai area. First of all, he made a short visit to Mr. Kato, a member living in Furukawa, near Sendai city. According to Mr. Kato, the quake which occurred on March 11<sup>th</sup> was bigger than anything he has ever experienced so that a part of his house collapsed. However, he and his family were safe. After this visit, he went to Kesennuma Port city, (*photo*) one of the areas most damaged by tsunami disaster. In this area it was still impossible for outside people to move about freely, because it was still dangerous due to the huge mass of debris. Luckily, Setsuko Kobayashi, a member who had been living in Sendai for 35 years and who is still keeping close contact with people there had suggested that he meet a friend, a Kesennuma high school teacher who could guide him through the city. It was very hard to describe how the city was, Masayuki said. He said also that he had been smelling a kind of odor which was also beyond description, maybe due to rotten fish. Then he visited a graveyard outside of the city where the tsunami victims had been buried in a hurry. When he put incense sticks on graves, our cultural and religious custom to pay respect to the dead, the school teacher told him that many people had been visiting this

area, but only very few had come to the graveyard.

The next day, he went see the evacuees from Minami Sanrikucho, a seacoast town hit hard by the disaster, who were staying at the Tome Community Centre in Sendai. Upon hearing Masayuki's report, we immediately decided to donate to them 200,000 yen (about 2,500 dollars), a part of our collected money. Setsuko Kobayashi went to the center the following week to hand them the money on behalf of Subud Japan.

Through this trip, it became clear that the priority in order to recover the seacoast towns such as Kesenuma is, first of all to concentrate recovery efforts to reconstruct the ports so that people can get back their jobs. Therefore, it is very important for the local people to be able to send their messages outside, said Masayuki.

#### **ANOTHER TRIP TO SENDAI:**

On May 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, Setsuko Kobayashi, Saodah Hayashi and myself, Arisa went to Sendai to attend a seminar on trauma relief methods held at the Shichigahama International Village, now turned into an evacuation center for some 400 people. This event was organized by a local NPO taking care of children, in collaboration with a Japanese chapter of an American research group on Somatic



Experience. Setsuko suggested this event, because she is connected to the two sides. Before the seminar, we made a short visit at a community space where the NPO was taking care of children. It was good to see children play cheerfully as well as any other children. However, the chair of this NPO told us that they seemed to be very cheerful, because they were happy to see people coming to visit them, but once the visitors had gone, they sometimes looked tired or sad, as they were still in shock.

As for the seminar, it was a big event because almost eighty people came from across the Sendai area, and some of them had lost their houses. During our visit, we met also a lady, Setsuko's acquaintance, who has been helping others in need by using her own money. Later, Setsuko told us that the lady was not an unusual case, and that many others were helping others on their own initiative.

Back from our trip, we are thinking and discussing how to contribute to humanitarian assistance in our way. This disaster is a really sad experience for us all, even when we are not victims, but I feel that we are also being tested how to commit in a society, as Subud, especially, when the society is facing difficulties. I'd like to add also that I feel so happy to be Subud, because we are always feeling connected with our brothers and sisters across the world through your prayers and encouragement to us. Hopefully, we, Subud members, can always share both our joy and sadness through our inner feeling. Thank you for all.