

JCIE REPORT

Bringing People Together **Assessing the Impact of 3/11 on US-Japan Grassroots Exchange**

Executive Summary

NEW YORK, NY—A new JCIE report by Dr. Atsuko Geiger finds that the massive disaster that struck Japan on March 11, 2011 triggered a flurry of US-Japan grassroots exchanges that have had a surprisingly large impact on bilateral relations. While there have been some historical cases of exchanges being launched after other disasters, the burst of activity seen after 3/11 has been unprecedented in both scope and intensity, reflecting the depth of preexisting US-Japan grassroots ties and building a broader foundation for greater people-to-people exchanges between the two societies.

The report's key findings include the following:

- At least 151 US-Japan grassroots exchanges between 2011 and 2014 were inspired by 3/11 or operated with a thematic focus related to the disaster. Of these, 83 were new exchanges, and the rest represented a refocusing and reenergizing of existing programs.
- More than \$52 million—a stunning amount—has been mobilized in Japan and the United States for nonprofit organizations to run these programs, with funds coming from government agencies, businesses, and individual donors.
- These exchanges have been playing a substantial role in building a stronger base of grassroots connections between different sectors of Japanese and US society and in improving perceptions of the relationship at the highest levels of national leadership.
- A key challenge now involves the sustainability of these programs after such a large, one-time influx of funding. While some organizations have tried to budget funding for the next several years, it is unclear how many of these new initiatives can be sustained.
- While the funding bubble has allowed many longstanding US-Japan organizations to carry out programs to help their communities while supporting the Tohoku area's recovery, there needs to be more focus on strengthening the institutional infrastructure of US-Japan grassroots exchange so that experienced organizations dedicated to bilateral exchange can continue to play this role in the future.

The exchanges identified in this report tended to fall into four categories: (1) educational exchanges for students and youth, often including those affected by 3/11; (2) sister-city initiatives in which US communities help their Japanese counterparts with recovery efforts; (3) exchanges focusing on civil society, typically promoting volunteerism, connecting nonprofit organizations, or providing professional training for nonprofit responders; and (4) exchanges that link disaster-affected communities to share best practices and offer consolation to one another.

To learn more or to read the full report, visit:

bit.ly/jcie-31lexchange

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