

THE JTI FOUNDATION NEWS



Torrential rain and soft terrain led to grave landslides triggering important rescue operations. Our partner Peace Winds Japan was one of the organizations on the ground



Peace Winds Japan deploys to search for survivors and victims of major landslides in Asaminami-Ward, Hiroshima, Japan

Partners in action!

In this Newsletter we take a look at three of our partners to find out more about their recent achievements, and how their efforts are making a real difference.

We will in particular recall the first deployment of Peace Winds Japan's search and rescue team in response to the heavy landslides that struck Japan in August.

Following up on the Istanbul Emergency Relief and Rapid Response Workshop held in June 2013 (see JTI Foundation Newsletter April-June 2013), we caught up with GEA and REDOG, who met at our event and have since created an official protocol agreement for collaboration in future deployment.

Finally we will walk you through the newly built walls of the temporary home for older residents of the Lixouri Foundation elderly center, destroyed by the recent Cephalonia earthquake.

Peace Winds Japan deploys

A FIRST DEPLOYMENT FOR THE YOUNG SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

We started supporting Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) develop a non-governmental search and rescue team in 2012. Within two years, the team deploys for the first time.

When a series of landslides and heavy rains hit Japan in the early hours of 20 August 2014, PWJ was able to take part in the national efforts to find survivors. Seven members and two trained dogs were deployed and managed to find two out of tens of people missing. Two of the search and rescue team's members share their experience.

Hiroshi Kunita is the Peace Winds Japan program manager for the search and rescue team. Kei Fujisaki is a member of the SAR team that participated to the search.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE MOMENT YOU DECIDED TO SEND THE SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) TEAM INTO THE FIELD?

Hiroshi Kunita: The landslides hit around 4:00am and we started gathering information before dawn. We constantly updated the SAR team whenever new information came to hand. We decided to deploy seven people and two dogs into the field at around 8:30am, after we obtained information that large-scale landslides had occurred at several locations and that people were already missing.



Landslides caused major damage, and led to the death of 74 people



Although Peace Winds Japan failed to rescue live victims, they nonetheless managed to provide critical support in finding missing people

WHAT DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED AT THE SITE?

Kei Fujisaki: It was the first time I had been in a disaster-struck area to engage in a real search and rescue operation. At first I was overwhelmed by the magnitude and intensity of the landslide – it was way beyond my imagination. I was also anxious about what we could achieve in such a chaotic environment. I felt incredibly powerless, yet I had a strong sense of mission to rescue someone buried in the mud. I knew that there were people waiting for me to find them.

HOW DID THE DOGS REACT?

Kei Fujisaki: They were also very nervous in the beginning, but once we started, our serious attitude and invincible determination affected them. They were able to perform their role well.

DID YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH OTHER RESCUE ORGANIZATIONS WHEN PREPARING FOR THIS MISSION?

Hiroshi Kunita: As we were asked to respond in emergency, we left our headquarters knowing we would meet other rescue organizations once we reached the site. When we arrived, we found the on-site operations coordination center and offered our services to help with search and rescue efforts.

HOW LONG WERE YOU SEARCHING?

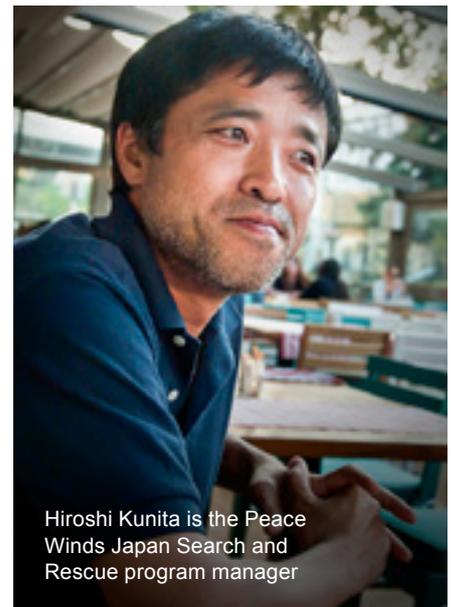
Kei Fujisaki: We were active at two sites. The first was Yagi 3 Chome, where we spent four hours between 1:00pm and 5:00pm. At that location sadly we found one body. At the second site, Midorii 7 Chome, we started at 6:00pm and finished at 9:20pm. Again we found one body.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FEELINGS WHEN THE DOGS FOUND MISSING PEOPLE?

Kei Fujisaki: I just wanted to hug and praise the dogs for not giving up. They hadn't been trained to find dead bodies, so they reacted a little differently to how they usually do when they find trapped or wounded people. It was a little confusing for them.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED THAT WILL HELP YOU IN FUTURE MISSIONS?

Kei Fujisaki: I think that our dogs still need to learn concentration skills so that they don't stop looking when their handlers aren't encouraging them. We need to train them to remain motivated even when they haven't found a victim for many hours. I also learned that our own behavior significantly influences the dogs, so we have to keep ourselves highly motivated and not be hesitant when facing obstacles.



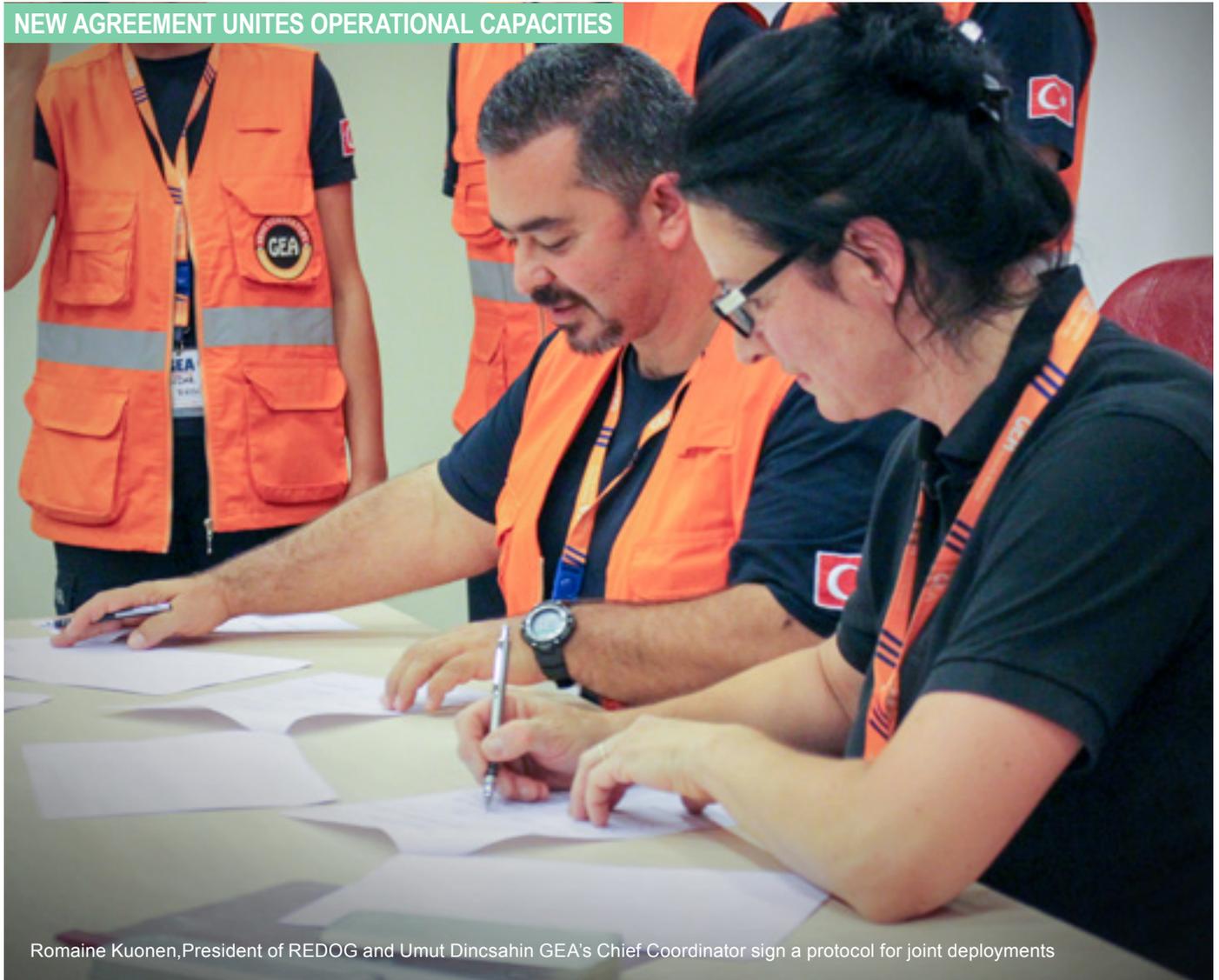
Hiroshi Kunita is the Peace Winds Japan Search and Rescue program manager

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF THE PAST YEAR, MANAGING THE SAR TEAM?

Hiroshi Kunita: We have made significant progress. We are able to offer dependable help and support in the field, and the level of motivation and confidence of the team members has increased far beyond what it was prior to the deployment. It was an important step for us to experience working with the fire department, police and defense forces.

GEA and REDOG

NEW AGREEMENT UNITES OPERATIONAL CAPACITIES



Romaine Kuonen, President of REDOG and Umut Dincsaahin GEA's Chief Coordinator sign a protocol for joint deployments

When we organized our Emergency Relief and Rapid Response Workshop in Istanbul in June 2013, we wanted to provide to our partners the opportunity to increase their network and improve their operations.

We were therefore pleased to learn that our event also provided the opportunity for two of our partners to form an official partnership.

When GEA (a Turkish volunteer search and rescue organization), and REDOG (a Swiss volunteer rescue dog association) met, they immediately discussed ideas for collaboration. More detailed discussions followed in Geneva at an event hosted by the JTI Foundation, and one year on, an official protocol agreement was signed in Izmir, Turkey on 29 August 2014 at GEA's national drill.

The protocol aims to improve the chance of locating and saving people buried under rubble following disasters. It combines GEA and REDOG's operational capacities and regulates their future joint deployments. It also creates a logistical advantage because the two partners will have access to each other's resources, increasing availability of equipment.

'This collaboration is a great opportunity for us', said Romaine Kuonen, President of REDOG. 'With GEA, we have a dedicated partner with broad experience in deployment, but we are also linked by friendship and a great deal of idealism. We are hopeful that our partnership will increase our capacity to help even more people in need. 'We owe a big thank you to the JTI Foundation because it enabled us to get together'.

Umut Dincsaahin, GEA's Chief Coordinator says, 'Our agreement with REDOG means we will be able to provide our services in more disasters and strengthen our canine search capacity. We will be one team in search and rescue efforts'.

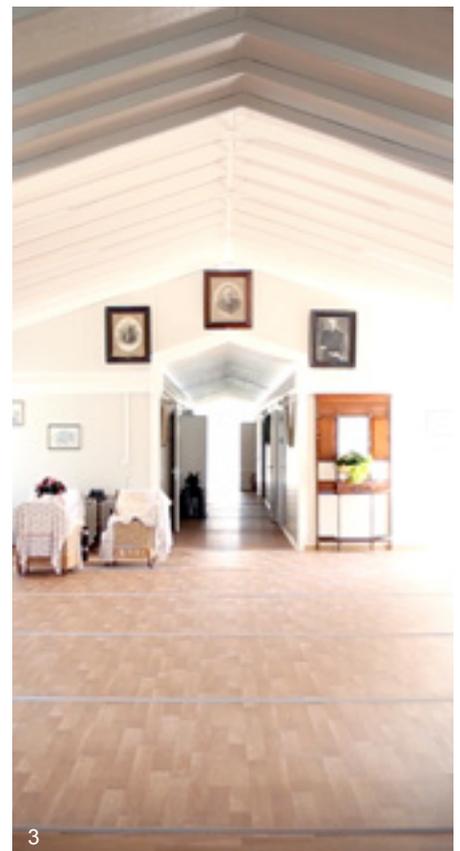
Finally at home...



Residents spend time in their new Home

The Cephalonia earthquake severely damaged local infrastructure, including The Home

When the Lixouri Charity Foundation's retirement home (The Home), was badly damaged by the Cephalonia earthquake in February 2014, 42 of the island's elderly were left homeless and had to be relocated to an emergency shelter set up in the town's sports center. The Home's historic building would be repaired and reconstructed, but in the meantime the residents needed an alternative place to live and receive care, so the JTI Foundation funded the purchase of prefabricated accommodation suited to the residents' needs. Once the Home is rebuilt, these premises will be used as a community center and an extension of the main building. Construction of the temporary shelter commenced in mid-June 2014 and was completed two months later. The inauguration event took place on Wednesday 10 September. We hereby document in pictures the achievements of this project which enabled older residents to recover decent living conditions.



1. The Lixouri Retirement Home (The Home) damaged by the earthquake;
2. Residents of The Home are relocated in emergency, into the city's sports center;
3. The JTI Foundation supports the construction of temporary facilities that will accommodate residents during the refurbishment of their permanent building;
4. The inauguration of the center also ensures older people recover facilities better designed to cover their needs.

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