



Japan Disaster Response

AMURT & AMURTEL help children and the elderly recover from Japanese tsunami.

AMURT & AMURTEL have been working with local city officials in Shichigahama and Utsunomia to provide different levels of support to both young and old survivors of the recent deadly tsunami. Some of our team members are assisting the elderly to rebuild their lives by helping clear debris from their homes, a service that is received with exceptional gratitude. Dada Ganadevananda, the team leader, reports: "The Japanese are an amazing people, culturally trained in the virtues of patience and collective harmony; their composure and wisdom giving us a taste of their mature humanity. This is a community prepared for tsunamis. One pensioner told me he had experienced three of them in his life but even he couldn't imagine one of such power, capable of sweeping away in few minutes 25% of his town". Our team members have recounted many tales of heroism, including the focused response of one man who acted swiftly to warn his neighbors about the tsunami, thereby saving 65 lives.

Our teams make daily visits to the refugee centers in the area to provide counseling to help people cope with mental trauma, and physical activity such as stretching and yoga exercises to ease tension in the body in a joyful way. For the children, we organize cooperative games, soccer matches and singing. The city officials have been very impressed with our



commitment, and have provided an office for the team within one of the refugee centers.

Sabine Thompson, an American volunteer, writes: "The survivors of the tsunami have blankets, but they need people to warm up their gloomy outlook for the future and give them hope. They have food, but they need people to nurture their hearts. They are surrounded with other human beings, but they need someone willing to stop and hear their story."

Our teams will continue to serve the Japanese people into the foreseeable future, demonstrating that all human problems can be solved if we open our hearts and unite our intentions.

*For more info please visit:
www.amurt.net/programs/east-asia/japan*



What happened to the children of Romania after the media spotlight faded?



AMURT's program offers disadvantaged youth career planning, employment, decision-making and study skills.

Over the last 20 years, AMURT and AMURTEL have run two family-style children's homes in Domnesti and Panatau that provided a loving and healthy alternative to the massive, overcrowded and neglectful communist institutions. Since the end of 2008 we have set up transitional apartments for the children, now grown up, so they can lead independent lives. AMURTEL still has a group of 7 smaller children that arrived in 2001 from the maternity ward where they had been abandoned at birth. The youngest is 11 years old, so AMURTEL will provide care for them for at least another 7 years.

AMURT: Transitional Program for Homeless Youth

In the meantime, building on the experience of transitioning young people towards social integration, AMURT opened a new project, in partnership with the local government, to address the needs of homeless youth. Very few NGOs have taken on this particularly challenging target group – and even fewer programs have been successful in helping them leave the streets and integrate into society. The young men, aged between 18 and 26 years, start learning basic life skills such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping while living together in AMURT's residential center in Domnesti.

Many homeless youth, especially those who were residents in the state homes or in a tense, dysfunctional family, didn't learn basic skills that most adults, and even other youth, take for granted. They have not vacuumed, ironed a shirt, cooked a meal, balanced an account, kept a job, or solved an argument through compromise, so life skills training plays an important role in this project. They also receive individual and group counseling sessions, and learn to identify their talents, potentials and interests. They are supported in receiving vocational training according to the demand of the local labor market, and in finding and maintaining jobs. As they progress towards autonomy, they shift to the transitional social apartment in Bucharest where they begin paying bills and maintaining themselves with much less supervision. So far, out of 18 beneficiaries, 14 have completed the program. The dropout rate has been exceptionally low, which is a real success for this type of program that typically experiences a 60% dropout rate.

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AMURT's youth beneficiaries learn marketable skills in the construction trade.



Children from the Fountain of Hope and Familia AMURTEL participate in a summer adventure camp called "Ready to Fly" that teaches life skills and cooperation.

AMURTEL: Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities

In addition to the children's homes, AMURTEL has also been managing 2 kindergartens in Bucharest that pioneered the concept of "inclusive education" – integrating children with special needs into a normal kindergarten environment instead of segregating them into special institutions. Children with disabilities had been severely marginalized during the Communist period. Parents of such children were pressured to abandon them to institutions for the "Irrecoverables", in which conditions were inhumane, hidden from the public eye in remote rural areas.

The AMURTEL kindergartens use the creative, holistic and progressive model of Neohumanist Education, which is currently being accredited as a nationally recognized educational alternative in Romania.

AMURTEL: Fountain of Hope After-School Center

In 2007 AMURTEL opened an after-school center in the village of Panatau

which provides homework support and hot meals to 23 local primary schoolchildren at risk of dropping out. Many of these children are raised by parents who abandoned of education at an early age and are unable to provide their children with the support they need to stay in school.

Though Romania is a member of the EU, its rural areas are still undeprivileged. Some of the children walk more than an hour to school on an empty stomach, which affects their ability to concentrate properly in class. The Fountain of Hope program aims to break this vicious cycle of poverty through supporting these children to stay in school. So far all of the beneficiaries have increased their school attendance by 90%.

In addition, AMURTEL organized a special intensive summercampwithchildrenfromFamiliaAMURTELand Fountain of Hope. A trainer from Outward Bound led them through various challenging experiences, and they had the opportunity to plan a budget and buy their own school supplies!

For more information visit their websites:

www.amurt.ro www.amurtel.ro



Disadvantaged schoolchildren are introduced to computer technology at the Fountain of Hope.



APPEAL: These projects need your support. Please make a donation to our offices or online.

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AMURT starts work in Nigeria

AMURT started working in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, in late 2010. We decided to focus on the health sector, as the indicators for maternal and child mortality are among the highest in the world.

Initially, we launched a primary healthcare initiative in Ebonyi State, the least developed state in the south of the country, joining forces with Action Aid Nigeria, the local government, and the communities we would be partnering with, to open three rural health centers. The initial vision of the health centers, based on community ownership and management, came from local women's associations.

AMURT provided furniture, medical equipment, supplies and drugs for each center, and financed the construction of bathrooms and latrines. In addition, with our partner, we started intensive advocacy to pressure the government to assume responsibility. Once the local head of the health department pledged her support the government agreed to assign health workers to the facilities.

The three health centers at Omege, Ephenium and Offia Oji were officially opened by Her Excellency, the First Lady of Ebonyi State, on November 24th. The opening ceremony was well covered by local and national media. Now they are attracting a lot of people, especially the most remote one at Offia Oji. In fact, to accommodate the demand for both inpatient and outpatient services, AMURT will build an additional three rooms there.



Mothers with babies crowding the waiting room at Offia Oji Health Center



School children doing traditional dances on the opening day at Offia Oji Health Center

AMURT uses WHO's 'Continuum of Care' model for maternal, newborn and child health that includes integrated service delivery for mothers and children from pregnancy to delivery, for the immediate postnatal period, and through childhood. The Continuum of Care recognizes that safe childbirth is critical to the health of both the woman and the newborn child—and that a healthy start in life is an essential step towards a sound childhood and a productive life.

As well as clinical services, our programs include supplementary training for the health workers, extensive health education in the thirty-four villages in the project area, and community outreach programs. Within the program's year time frame we expect to transform the initial three centers into models and then replicate the model in a further ten rural locations in the state. Our work will also extend to rural water supply and sanitation.

For the first time in West Africa we are broadening our community-based approach to include local government and NGO partners. By strengthening their capacities we are improving the long-term sustainability of the program. It's overwhelmingly clear to us that through partnership we can accomplish things that we could never achieve working separately.

For more information on AMURT's work in Nigeria please visit www.africa.amurt.net/nigeria