

## Caring for the Vulnerable before and at the Time of Disaster

### Religions for Peace Japan

### The problem / issue

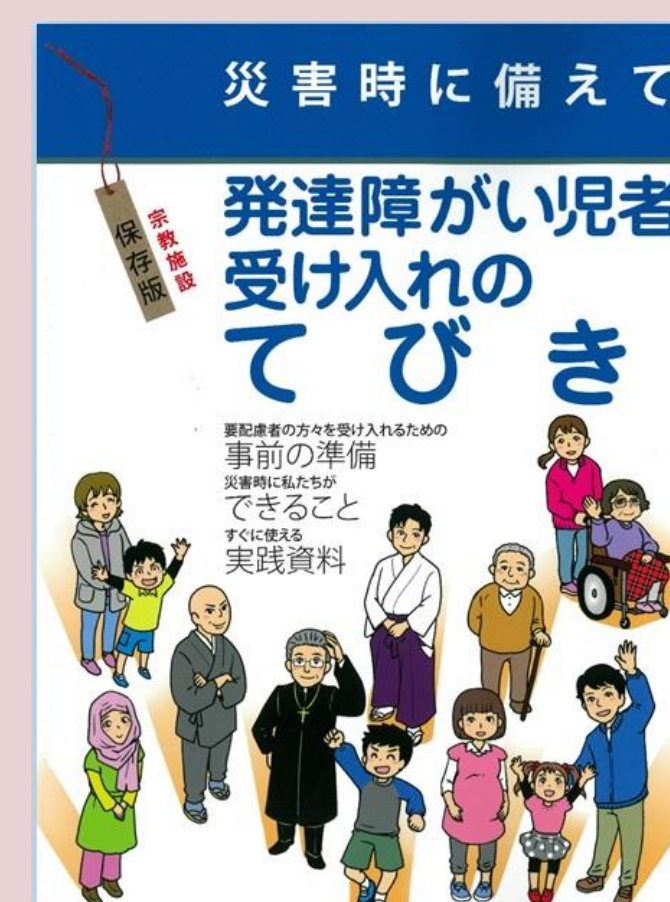
The project highlights the problem that the vulnerable face when disaster occurs. Many tend to be left out and deserted. Tremendous number of local citizens have evacuated to neighbor shelters (schools, community centers, religious facilities and etc.) after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant accident of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 and the Kumamoto Earthquake in 2016. **The vulnerable** were elderly people, people with disabilities, infants, pregnant women, foreigners, sexual minorities, and others who needed special care among the people who evacuated to the shelters. However, they **have faced many difficulties**. Individual care was not enough **because of “emergency” situation or “group living” in the confusion right after the disaster**. Moreover, some predicted the difficulties of group living at the shelters, so they tend to give up going to the shelters.



### The project

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, we have continuously **interacted with mothers who have children with developmental disabilities** such as autism, and listened to their voice in Kesennuma city of Miyagi Prefecture. Also, we have learned that the same difficulties for the vulnerable occurred in other disaster areas as well. So, as religious practitioners, we also listened attentively to those who are vulnerable. From those interactions, we have learned that many people could not go to shelters and had many challenges. This was the reason why we have **published a “guidebook” to encourage religious organization/facilities to prepare (understand the disabled and know preparation materials etc.) for welcoming people who need special care**.

Because religious facilities often own spacious properties and buildings, people of community would be able to take shelter as safe place. Then, we have **held workshops on how to utilize it**.



### Key Partners

RfP Japan Women's Committee members (Buddhists, Catholic, Muslim, Kyoha-Shinto, New Religions), Motoyoshi Kizuna Tsunagaritai (Kesennuma city, Miyagi Prefecture) \*Parent Group of Children with Disability, Ven. Daido Jikaku (The Buddhist NGO Network of Japan), Mr. Takayuki Haba (“Minawa”, Support Center for Children with Developmental Disorders of Kumamoto), Prof. Toshihiro Higashi (Director, Center for Persons with Disabilities of Kumamoto), Ms. Keiko Maeda (Representative, Support Group for Parents of Children with Developmental Disorders)

### Key Objectives

Acknowledgement, Preparation, Advocacy

### Target Groups

Multi-religious institutions, RfP Japan members and others to prepare for welcoming people who need special care.

### Then What Happened?

After publishing the “guidebook”, we were able to distribute them, to religious organizations and public authorities which do not belong to RfP family, and not only to religious practitioners but also to many others.

### Outcomes

Our project was highlighted on TV programs and newspapers. We were able to see things from the perspective of the vulnerable. We could realize the connection and shared well-being by communicating with the vulnerable. We could learn the importance of listening to silent voice of the vulnerable. We could get a sense that we are not only giving support to the vulnerable but mutually receiving many things from the vulnerable. We could realize we make the most of our life through connecting with various other lives.

