Introduction

As a nongovernmental organization (NGO) working with the United Nations, the SGI has been active in public education on peace and other issues as well as providing humanitarian assistance and promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Such initiatives are developed according to local needs and priorities, and each independent SGI organization around the world undertakes activities and projects appropriate to its own culture and context.

The SGI’s activities in these areas are based on the following key elements deriving from Buddhist philosophy:

- Belief in the dignity of life
- The interconnectedness of all life
- Reflection, dialogue and nonviolence

The SGI and its members have been promoting a wide range of disaster risk reduction activities over the years, taking advantage of its unique strengths and capabilities as a faith-based organization (FBO). The SGI is currently working with other like-minded NGOs to support the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015.
Taiwan, August 2012

On August 24, 2012, the Tian Ping Typhoon assailed Taiwan, flooding areas in the Hengchun Peninsula in the southernmost part of the country. Townships such as Hengchun, Chechang and Manzhou were devastated by overflowing water and mud.

Taiwan Soka Association (TSA) assigned Vice General Director Chang Sheng-li to be in charge of flood relief efforts, which began as soon as the road to Hengchun re-opened. Aside from giving encouragement, TSA members assisted the flood victims in removing damaged furniture from their homes and clearing mud from the streets. Members from Kaohsiung County donated food and drinkable water.

A local Disaster Management Committee was set up based at the SGI-Philippines Cebu Community Center, which is located in the hardest hit Visayas Region, to enable members to communicate closely with each area and gather the latest information on the region.

The SGI-Philippines headquarters in Quezon City began gathering relief goods such as bottled water and clothes from members across the country. These goods were then sent to public agencies such as the Philippine Red Cross, a local TV station and the Cebu Community Center. Youth members participated as volunteers and supported the operations.

The SGI has been actively engaged in various humanitarian activities worldwide. At times of disaster, local SGI community centers provide shelter for the displaced victims.

Philippines, November 2013

Super Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc across central Philippines, killing more than 5,000 people and leaving nearly one million displaced.

A local Disaster Management Committee was set up based at the SGI-Philippines Cebu Community Center, which is located in the hardest hit Visayas Region, to enable members to communicate closely with each area and gather the latest information on the region.

The SGI-Philippines headquarters in Quezon City began gathering relief goods such as bottled water and clothes from members across the country. These goods were then sent to public agencies such as the Philippine Red Cross, a local TV station and the Cebu Community Center. Youth members participated as volunteers and supported the operations.

Soka Gakkai centers
A total of 42 Soka Gakkai centers throughout the affected areas served as evacuation centers, housing up to 5,000 people.

Providing emergency food
Staff and volunteers at the Tohoku Culture Center worked through the night to make about 1,000 rice balls using emergency rice supplies and operating all their rice cookers with emergency power generators.

Delivery of breakfast
Breakfast prepared by volunteers who worked through the night was served at the Tohoku Culture Center from 6:35 am on the morning following the earthquake. Snacks and donuts were provided for children.

Relief supplies from other areas
Youth members in Yamagata Prefecture load relief supplies and food onto trucks.

Generators
In several cases, generators were provided by local people, and residents pooled food supplies in order to provide meals to those gathered at the centers.

The SGI’s strength lies in building communities and empowering people to take action to help others.

The Great East Japan Earthquake

Generators
In several cases, generators were provided by local people, and residents pooled food supplies in order to provide meals to those gathered at the centers.

Delivery of relief supplies
SGI volunteers delivered relief supplies and offered encouragement to survivors who were forced to remain at home.

Doctors and nurses
Soka Gakkai headquarters in Tokyo and local organizations in nearby prefectures dispatched volunteer doctors and nurses to provide health consultations.

Concerts at shelters
Members of a brass band organized concerts in shelters in order to encourage the evacuees.

Philippines, November 2013

Super Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc across central Philippines, killing more than 5,000 people and leaving nearly one million displaced.

A local Disaster Management Committee was set up based at the SGI-Philippines Cebu Community Center, which is located in the hardest hit Visayas Region, to enable members to communicate closely with each area and gather the latest information on the region.

The SGI-Philippines headquarters in Quezon City began gathering relief goods such as bottled water and clothes from members across the country. These goods were then sent to public agencies such as the Philippine Red Cross, a local TV station and the Cebu Community Center. Youth members participated as volunteers and supported the operations.

Soka Gakkai centers
A total of 42 Soka Gakkai centers throughout the affected areas served as evacuation centers, housing up to 5,000 people.

Providing emergency food
Staff and volunteers at the Tohoku Culture Center worked through the night to make about 1,000 rice balls using emergency rice supplies and operating all their rice cookers with emergency power generators.

Delivery of breakfast
Breakfast prepared by volunteers who worked through the night was served at the Tohoku Culture Center from 6:35 am on the morning following the earthquake. Snacks and donuts were provided for children.

Relief supplies from other areas
Youth members in Yamagata Prefecture load relief supplies and food onto trucks.

Generators
In several cases, generators were provided by local people, and residents pooled food supplies in order to provide meals to those gathered at the centers.

The SGI’s strength lies in building communities and empowering people to take action to help others.

The Great East Japan Earthquake

The SGI’s strength lies in building communities and empowering people to take action to help others.

Generators
In several cases, generators were provided by local people, and residents pooled food supplies in order to provide meals to those gathered at the centers.

Delivery of relief supplies
SGI volunteers delivered relief supplies and offered encouragement to survivors who were forced to remain at home.

Doctors and nurses
Soka Gakkai headquarters in Tokyo and local organizations in nearby prefectures dispatched volunteer doctors and nurses to provide health consultations.

Concerts at shelters
Members of a brass band organized concerts in shelters in order to encourage the evacuees.

Philippines, November 2013

Super Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc across central Philippines, killing more than 5,000 people and leaving nearly one million displaced.

A local Disaster Management Committee was set up based at the SGI-Philippines Cebu Community Center, which is located in the hardest hit Visayas Region, to enable members to communicate closely with each area and gather the latest information on the region.

The SGI-Philippines headquarters in Quezon City began gathering relief goods such as bottled water and clothes from members across the country. These goods were then sent to public agencies such as the Philippine Red Cross, a local TV station and the Cebu Community Center. Youth members participated as volunteers and supported the operations.

Soka Gakkai centers
A total of 42 Soka Gakkai centers throughout the affected areas served as evacuation centers, housing up to 5,000 people.

Providing emergency food
Staff and volunteers at the Tohoku Culture Center worked through the night to make about 1,000 rice balls using emergency rice supplies and operating all their rice cookers with emergency power generators.

Delivery of breakfast
Breakfast prepared by volunteers who worked through the night was served at the Tohoku Culture Center from 6:35 am on the morning following the earthquake. Snacks and donuts were provided for children.

Relief supplies from other areas
Youth members in Yamagata Prefecture load relief supplies and food onto trucks.

Generators
In several cases, generators were provided by local people, and residents pooled food supplies in order to provide meals to those gathered at the centers.

The SGI’s strength lies in building communities and empowering people to take action to help others.

The Great East Japan Earthquake

The SGI’s strength lies in building communities and empowering people to take action to help others.

Generators
In several cases, generators were provided by local people, and residents pooled food supplies in order to provide meals to those gathered at the centers.

Delivery of relief supplies
SGI volunteers delivered relief supplies and offered encouragement to survivors who were forced to remain at home.

Doctors and nurses
Soka Gakkai headquarters in Tokyo and local organizations in nearby prefectures dispatched volunteer doctors and nurses to provide health consultations.

Concerts at shelters
Members of a brass band organized concerts in shelters in order to encourage the evacuees.
As a Buddhist organization, the SGI offers memorial and prayer services for disaster victims. These memorial services have helped many grief-stricken, despondent survivors to restore their will to live and communicate again. The SGI also offers support and encouragement to the bereaved families. SGI organizations have organized donation and fundraising drives after disasters. The SGI has donated relief supplies for evacuees, books for school children as well as monetary assistance.

**Memorial Services**

As a Buddhist organization, the SGI offers memorial and prayer services for disaster victims. These memorial services have helped many grief-stricken, despondent survivors to restore their will to live and communicate again. The SGI also offers support and encouragement to the bereaved families.

**Donation and Fundraising Drives**

SGI organizations have organized donation and fundraising drives after disasters. The SGI has donated relief supplies for evacuees, books for school children as well as monetary assistance.

---

United States, May 2011

On May 22, 2011, an EF5 tornado hit Joplin, Missouri. SGI-USA members living in the city held a prayer meeting the following month, where participants shared their experience of surviving the tornado and how it had brought them a greater appreciation for life.

Hong Kong, May 2008

On May 21, 2008, SGI-Hong Kong joined other Buddhist groups at a joint memorial service conducted by the Hong Kong Buddhist Association to pray for the peace and security of areas affected by natural disasters and the repose of victims who have passed away due to natural disasters.

---

**The Great East Japan Earthquake**

**Restoration Youth Speech Conference**

In the aftermath of the earthquake, children and youth in affected areas were particularly encouraged by the support they received from around the world and this motivated them to rebuild their communities as early as possible.

Survivors need to share and express their feelings openly after a trauma. Soka Gakkai has been organizing “Restoration Youth Speech Conference” events since 2013, inviting young survivors to share their experiences candidly as well as their hopes for the future. The disaster narratives of these young people have instilled hope in the hearts of other survivors.

**Concert Series**

“Building Bonds of Hope”

There are three major musical groups within Soka Gakkai which have won numerous national competitions throughout the country: the Soka Gloria Wind Orchestra, the Soka Renaissance Vanguard Drum and Brass Corps and the Shinano Men’s Choir. These talented musicians volunteered to hold concerts for the survivors in the affected areas. The chorus groups visited temporary housing units and held concerts in public meeting rooms. The performances are interactive, and songs are chosen that best resonate with the demographics of the audience.

---

Iwaki City, January 2014

---

Kamaishi City, April 2014

---

Miharu Town, March 2014

---

Kamakshi City, April 2014

---

Miharu Town, March 2014
Individual Experiences

A distinctive characteristic of the SGI’s DRR efforts is found in the individual members’ proactive voluntary efforts. The members may volunteer to help out at SGI centers or initiate their own relief and recovery efforts.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda stressed this aspect in his 2014 Peace Proposal.

“We need to recognize the importance of fostering, on a day-to-day basis, the ‘social capital’ of interconnection and networks among people living in a locality. More than anything, the will and vitality of the people living in the community are key.”

Marc Bergman
Washington D.C., the United States

His interest in DRR developed in large part from many years of experience in heading up teams of people responsible for the safety and smooth running of large SGI meetings.

After retiring from a company he got a second degree and began working in the field of disaster management and security for the U.S. government. One of his critical efforts is to create cooperative relationship among different stakeholders. For the first time in years, his team recently succeeded in reaching a degree of consensus on how they would work together during a crisis.

Kahoru Kannabi
Iwaki, Japan

As chief secretary of a nonprofit organization called “The People,” Ms. Kannabi started a relief effort to provide food and set up cooking facilities at local evacuation centers immediately after the earthquake of 2011. Her relief team successfully created a network of women at various evacuation centers who could relay detailed information regarding specific items that were lacking. It helped volunteers to deliver these items to the appropriate shelters.

She was eventually appointed chief secretary of one disaster relief center in the city due to her success in providing aid to many people. She remarks, “What I want to deliver more than any relief item is the energy and will to survive.”

Kenichi Kurosawa
Ishinomaki, Japan

When the tsunami struck, Mr. Kurosawa clung to a pine tree and endured the freezing cold throughout the night.

Not wanting to be crushed by feelings of helplessness, he decided to make a large signboard as proof of his determination to get back on his feet. Two friends joined him in assembling scrap wood with some screws they found in the rubble. With a sincere desire to encourage others in similar situations, they began painting the words “Let’s keep going, Ishinomaki!” The signboard, 1.8 m x 10 m, could be seen in the devastated city, standing in the ruins of his home. It has become a symbol of the undefeated spirit of

Prevention Stage

SGI organizations proactively communicate and work with local governments on ways of preventing and preparing for disasters. This enables them to collaborate efficiently and effectively at times of crisis.

Awareness raising is one of the key elements of the SGI’s activities for disaster prevention and preparation. Seminars and forums to increase public awareness are organized in SGI centers.

Awareness Survey

The Soka Gakkai Japan student division carried out a survey on youth awareness of issues related to the March 11, 2011, earthquake, tsunami and ensuing nuclear accident between December 2013 and February 2014. This survey is the third conducted (the first two surveys only covered the Tohoku region).

The survey collected responses from 1,905 students. Respondents answered questions about the recovery process and how their outlook has changed since the disaster.

Asked whether they went about their daily lives with a conscious awareness of March 11, 30% of respondents stated “No or mostly no,” compared to 17.7% in September 2011, indicating a decline in awareness and sense of urgency concerning the disaster. Tohoku respondents seemed more practical in their focus than those in Tokyo. When asked what is necessary for reconstruction, 50.7% of Tohoku respondents identified the economic resources of central government, against only 36.1% of Tokyo students. When asked what students can do to contribute to reconstruction efforts, those in Tohoku more readily identified volunteering—37.7% of respondents against 25.4% in Tokyo.

Professor Toshiaki Muramoto of the International Research Institute of Disaster Science at Tohoku University, who helped design and supervise the survey, commented: “This survey provides a key insight on the changing levels of awareness of March 11 among Japan’s student population. . . In and of itself, such an initiative helps to put a stop to rising ignorance on the issue.”

Forum

On August 30, 2014, Taiwan Soka Association (TSA) organized a lecture on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at its Chianjen Culture Center in the city of Kaohsiung. The lecture was given by a psychiatrist at Kaohsiung Medical University’s Chung-Ho Memorial Hospital and was attended by some 200 people, including many residents of the local community still struggling in the aftermath of gas explosions which took place one month before.

The psychiatrist described the symptoms of PTSD. For those suffering from PTSD, he also highlighted the importance of support and understanding and the value of interacting with others at activities such as discussion meetings, a core activity of TSA.

What percentage of restoration efforts do you think have been completed after the earthquake?

- Almost 0%
- Around 20%
- Around 40%
- Around 60%
- Around 80%
The SGI actively participates in international discussions on the roles of FBOs in DRR. Experts and field activists agree that FBOs have unique roles to play which can be effectively leveraged at times of emergency.

**UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs**

From June 28–30, 2011, UNHCR held its Annual Consultations with NGOs at the International Conference Center in Geneva, Switzerland.

A thematic session titled “Strengthening protection: The role of faith-based organizations” examined the challenges faced by local and national FBOs in providing protection and the opportunities that exist to strengthen the protection role they play both within communities and at the national level through stronger, more effective partnerships with UNHCR and international NGOs.

An SGI representative stressed that it is empowerment of survivors that can make humanitarian relief effective and sustainable and that FBOs can play a key role in this regard. He quoted the words of Mr. Akihiko Morishima, Soka Gakkai leader in Miyagi Prefecture: “Disaster victims are not weak people... I know that they have strength within themselves. They have the potential to engage in relief activities.”

**Joint Statement Launched at the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference for DRR**

On June 25, 2014, SGI and ACT Alliance co-organized a side event titled “The Role of Faith Based Organizations in Disaster Resilience” at the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Following activity reports from the two organizations, the side event also saw the launch of an FBO Statement on DRR. The statement calls for disaster risk reduction strategies to include coordinated efforts of FBOs, local governments and community organizations and was the result of a multifaith consultation on DRR organized by SGI, ACT Alliance and Caritas Asia, on June 22.

On July 15, the FBO statement, signed by the Humanitarian Forum Indonesia (HFI) and Dompet Dhuafa, an Indonesian NGO, in addition to the three organizations above, was introduced by the SGI’s representative to the UN in Geneva during the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Third UN World Conference on DRR.

**About SGI**

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide lay Buddhist association with memberships in 192 countries and territories. Based on the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, SGI members aim to develop positive human potentialities for hope, courage and altruistic action.

Contact: +81-3-5360-9832

www.sgi.org