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A Year after: Finnish Aid to the Disaster Areas in Japan

The disaster on March 11 in northeastern Japan deeply touched many Finnish people. News about the disaster and pictures of the devastation in Tohoku area evoked a desire to help. Many Finnish companies, friendship societies, musicians and designers as well as ordinary citizens decided to take action to help Japan in the times of need. The amount and scale of different aid projects for Japan during the past year is impressive ranging from Santa Claus and the Moomin characters visiting Tohoku, to several charity concerts in Finland and Japan.

The [Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) donated 500 000 euros through the Finnish Red Cross to the Japanese Red Cross. The Ambassador of Finland Jari Gustafsson as well as other embassy personnel has visited the disaster area to pay condolences and participate in voluntary work. In addition several Finnish companies, organizations and ordinary citizens made donations to Japan through Red Cross and other organizations. The city of Oulu in northern Finland donated 100 000 euros to Sendai, a city with many exchanges with Finland and which is situated in the severely damaged area.



In April 2011 a large scale charity concert “[From Orchestra to Orchestras](#)” was organized in Helsinki. 94 musicians led by Finnish conductor Leif Segerstam performed voluntarily, and the profits of over 18 000 euros were given to Association of Japanese Symphony Orchestras to aid the musicians of the disaster areas. Front row Finnish rock and pop artists gathered together by Finnish rock legend Michael Monroe organized a big charity concert at the end of March 2011 in Helsinki. The artists managed to collect nearly 26 000 euros contributed to the Red Cross. Besides these, several other charity concerts were organized throughout the country, such as series of “Teetetki Japanille” events.



Another important way for Finns to help Japan has been efforts to bring joy to the people of the disaster area. The Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Japan



organized a [charity auction](#) at the Embassy of Finland in Tokyo to bring the Moomin characters from Naantali, Finland to encourage people who experienced the earthquake/tsunami. In early December last year “[Tohoku Santa Project](#)” supported Santa Claus from Finland to visit the Tohoku area and bring presents to children. Santa’s

tour was accompanied by Belacanto choir’s Christmas carols and traditional Finnish “kantele” music. Tohoku area has also been visited by a cello quartet from Turku as well as deaf rap artist Signmark.

Despite the geographic distance between the two countries, material assistance was also made. Japanese mothers living in Finland sent total of 14 000 packages of Tutteli liquid milk to families with babies who were troubled because clean water was lacking to make baby milk from powder. Finnish wood and paper company [UPM Kymmene](#) donated materials for renowned Japanese architect Shigeru Ban’s temporary housing project in Onagawa. Puuha Group decided to bring joy to the reconstruction areas by donating Moomin-themed playground equipment worth 60 000 euros.



In addition numerous Japan-Finland friendship societies, student and other activity groups, organizations and companies have organized charity events and aid projects, and continue to do so to help the people of Japan.