

OBI DELIVERS LARGE QUANTITY OF RICE TO DEVASTATED RIKUZEN TAKATA, JAPAN

Snow, Lack Of fuel, Impassable Roads Making Relief Efforts Difficult

RIKUZEN TAKATA, JAPAN (March 17, 2011) -- For the last two days the Operation Blessing International (OBI) disaster relief team has supplied food and water to over 1,500 people despite heavy snow, a lack of fuel, impassable roads, and the nuclear threat.

Yesterday the OBI team, under the direction of David Darg, director of international disaster relief, drove to the city of Oshu, where, thanks to the charity's donors, they were able to purchase a large amount of rice at a supermarket. Darg had learned about the situation in Rikuzen Takata, a completely devastated area to the North that had only just been made accessible and was desperately low on food.

The team drove north through the mountains and a heavy snowstorm with whiteout conditions, only to arrive to a scene of total devastation unlike anything David Darg had seen before.

Darg said, "Since 2005, I have responded to dozens of major disasters around the world. In all my experience, I have never seen destruction like I saw in Rikuzen Takata today. Thousands of homes had been disintegrated into millions of fragments of wood. One three story building that must have been 70 feet tall gave clues to how high the Tsunami waters were; one resident told us that people taking refuge on the roof were standing in water up to their waists! The military had just bulldozed some of the roads clear, leaving walls of debris 25 feet high that we walked through like a maze. The debris was a mixture of wooden homes, household items and mud. It is believed around 10,000 people were either killed or are still missing right here."

OBI set up at one of 50 shelters, a school housing over 1,000 people, many of whom were sleeping in the auditorium. "The leadership at the shelter were so grateful when we told them we had rice. They are feeding the 1000 people in the shelter and 200 more who are without food. Up until now, the center had only been able to provide bread in very limited amounts and this was difficult, especially for the elderly who were very hungry."

The rice that OBI provided should last the shelter one week.

On Tuesday, the team provided food and drinking water for 250 people who have set up a makeshift shelter in a school building in Shiogama, a city also decimated by the disaster. Said Darg, "Families have moved into the classrooms and are sleeping on the floors on blankets. Outside, some of the families were burning wood in a metal can to keep warm; a sight that I'm told is very unusual for Japan where electricity and fuel networks are widespread. The food and water we had in the van was unloaded into the school kitchen and within 2 hours was being served to everyone in the shelter."

Next, OBI is planning to distribute kerosene for the heaters in the shelters, as the temperature remains below freezing.

For more information please log on to www.ob.org.

ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL:

Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 23 countries around the world on a daily basis. OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the fifth year in a row (2009), a feat that only 4% of rated charities have ever achieved. In November 2010, Forbes named OBI as the 6th most efficient charity in America. Additionally, the Chronicle of Philanthropy currently ranks OBI as the 23rd largest charity and the 6th largest international charity. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 235 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$2.7 billion to date.

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