

SWISS Insight

From employees to employees



Winter 2011

Core brand values

Useful guidelines

New destination

Beijing here we come!

Zurich Airport sports our new logo

Cube out, fin in

"Wings for Japan"

**Young tsunami victims
to visit Switzerland**

ID travel tip

Dubai

30 young tsunami victims to visit Switzerland

SWISS helps get 'Wings for Japan' aloft

Beat Pfändler, Maître de Cabine

The Japanese earthquake of 12 March caused almost unimaginable devastation. The tsunami that was triggered by the offshore quake hit the coast of Northern Japan with its full force. Thousands died, and 100,000 more lost their homes and virtually all their possessions. Children were especially hard hit, with many left partially or wholly orphaned. Getting direct help to those who needed it proved hard, too, as our maître de cabine Beat Pfändler, who knows the country well, found out. But the 'Wings for Japan' project which he subsequently devised is now taking off. Here is Beat's report.

Night was falling as our A340 departed from Tokyo Narita for Hong Kong. It was one of our first flights to Japan after the tsunami disaster. The plane was almost empty. The crew gazed out of the windows to view the region affected, which had just had some snowfall, too. At moments like this it doesn't take much imagination or compassion to want to provide immediate help and fill the next flight's seats with some of the freezing sufferers. But how do you go about organizing something like that?



SWISS offers its support

Japanese people grow up with natural disasters. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis have all helped bond one of the most homogenous peoples on Earth. 'Suffer it together and master it together' is the Japanese way. So would they want our help? I got in touch with some friends in the country. I also asked our SWISS Management Board if assistance could be offered through our flight operations. And CEO Harry Hohmeister agreed straight away to the suggestion of a 'tsunami care flight' that could bring victims to Switzerland for at least a temporary break.

It all proved tougher to organize than we'd imagined, though. In the areas affected, the priority was still on providing life's essentials, finding lost family members and reorganizing lives. Many people had lost their family documents, making it

harder to obtain passports at short notice. And there was also a clear desire to overcome the difficulties in a 'Japanese' way, without outside help.

But then Noboru Okabe, our District Manager for Japan, had a brilliant idea: he got in touch with BUNGEISHUNJUJU, a publishing house that had taken the initiative to collect accounts from 80 children who had experienced the disaster and publish them in a special book.

This allowed the 80 children to be contacted as a single group. And on this basis, our 'care flight' idea suddenly became far more feasible. The publishing house is now making most of the arrangements in Japan, and will bring the children and other victims to Narita Airport. There we will welcome them aboard for a flight to Switzerland. And in Zurich they will be met by Switzerland Tourism Japan, who will take care of them during their stay.

Helping to work through the trauma

And so, on the first anniversary of the disaster next March, 30 children and accompanying adults will arrive in Switzerland on our first 'Wings for Japan' tsunami care flight. The group will then head for a camp in the mountains where they will meet children from Switzerland, communicate with each other in their own way, make new friends and generally recover and regenerate in this new environment.

The week-long stay should not remain a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience, either. A travelling photo exhibition is also planned for Japan and Switzerland which should help find foster parents who are willing to help with the future development of those left orphaned and other disaster victims.

Our Wings for Japan project would love to hear from any other SWISS employees who would be willing to take on a project task or otherwise help in one capacity or another. If you're interested, please visit www.WingsForJapan.com or email me at beat.pfaendler@swiss.com."



Haruna Sato, a primary-school pupil from Kesenuma, made drawings like this to come to terms with the tragedy. Photo: Bungeishunjuu