

due to their inaccessibility by truck. On the other hand, relief materials were abundant in the large evacuation centers with good access to trunk roads. If the leader of an evacuation center saw some shortages in his center, he could just catch one of the news reporters coming every hour and shout to him, "We are short of material x!" The next day, material x would be delivered to the evacuation center by volunteer groups or private citizens who had seen the news.

However, there was a shortage of certain materials, which could be covered by international voluntary offers. Also, the Kobe and Tokyo authorities received these offers as symbols of good will and were grateful for these signs of solidarity, which were also an encouragement to the affected people. Offers of in-kind assistance from disaster-prone developing countries were especially accepted with gratitude. On the other hand, authorities were careful not to accept in-kind goods which could not be utilized. They were very careful not to waste these symbols of good will.

H. Useful In-Kind Relief Materials from Abroad

Blankets and plastic sheeting were welcomed. As one Kobe relief official put it, "No matter how many blankets there are, since blankets are multi-purpose, they can be used at any stage of relief operations and rehabilitation." Blankets were first delivered to evacuation centers and hospitals. They were used for rescue operations. Later when the evacuees moved into temporary public housing, they could take the blankets with them as necessary. Plastic sheeting was welcome. On 22 January, the weather report forecast rain for Kobe. Plastic sheeting was needed to make mock-up tents to protect evacuees, cover the stacks of relief materials piled up in schoolyards, cover the roofs of partially damaged houses and cover cracks on steep hillsides to prevent secondary landslides. Thousands of pieces of plastic sheeting were needed in one day. The first donations from the U.S.A., Canada and the U.K. were utilized immediately. Additional plastic sheeting from abroad was also used. Some was left over but could be used later for almost any purpose.

Bottled mineral water was another needed item. In Japan, where tap water is safe, drinking bottled mineral water is usually considered a luxury. However, because of the enormous damage to water pipes, bottled mineral water became a most valuable item. Plastic bottles of 1-2 liters can easily be packed in cartons, loaded onto trucks, delivered to evacuation centers and handed out to individuals. An elderly person can carry a bottle away with him and drink out of it for a whole day. Since Kobe is a densely populated area, there are no big rivers, lakes or ponds from which relief personnel could pump and filter water, add purifiers and distribute it in plastic jerrycans to the affected population. In some evacuation centers, where water tank trucks could come in, water was distributed in plastic jerrycans. However, in many evacuation centers with poor road access, bottled mineral water was a lifesaver. It was donated in large quantities by Australia, Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea. Some of the mineral water donated from abroad contained gas, to which the Japanese were not accustomed, and it could not be consumed in large quantities.

affected population, the team was frustrated that their medical skills were not needed and voiced dissatisfaction to the international mass media - which caused further friction. Before departing from their home countries, international medical NGOs had watched international TV coverage of Kobe, which had focused on the tragedies and miserable suffering of the affected people and had not mentioned much about local relief efforts. Thus, they naturally believed that there must be many seriously injured persons left on the streets and that they were dying every day without being treated. Also, the Japanese way of reporting death figures (which authorities issue only after bodies have actually been counted) made the death figures rise considerably each day and gave the impression (to outsiders following the situation through the international mass media) that many people were dying every day.

G. Offers of In-Kind International Assistance

Even though Japan did not ask for international assistance, numerous offers of in-kind assistance were received from governments. Seventy-six countries/regions, the UN, WHO and EU offered in-kind or cash contributions. The Japanese Government expressed deep gratitude for all this good will. Various items were offered, starting from basic items such as blankets to stationery and even mobile telephones. For these in-kind offers of relief materials and cash donations, the Japanese authorities decided to accept as much as possible, as long as they were useful to the affected population. Offers from 44 countries/regions were accepted, and delivery was arranged.

The first offer came from the U.S.A., which has military bases in Japan and emergency stocks in the country. On 19 January, 37,000 blankets were made available at the Itami airport, which neighbors Kobe. These were followed by additional blankets, tents, plastic sheeting and sleeping mats. Also, the services of marines stationed in Okinawa were made available to set up tents in schoolyards.

Since the port of Kobe was damaged and road access to Kobe from Kansai International Airport was also cut off, it took four days for local authorities to make arrangements for accepting in-kind materials from overseas. It was decided that if a donor could, at its own expense, send relief materials for the City of Kobe to Kansai International Airport, the Nippon Express Co. (nationwide forwarder designated to act as a public organization in an emergency) would transport it by shuttle ferry to Kobe's air cargo terminal located in the port of Kobe, and Kobe authorities would thereafter deliver it to the evacuation centers. At first, the offers of in-kind assistance from countries were transmitted from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Disaster Prevention Bureau of the National Land Agency to the Hyogo Prefectural Government and the Kobe Municipal Office to see if they really met the needs of the affected population. Later, this procedure was found to be too time-consuming. So the Hyogo Prefectural Government prepared a roughly categorized list of useful materials to be used by the MOFA for immediate checking.

Since Japan is a country with abundant consumer goods, neither the local nor national government saw any need to ask for in-kind assistance from abroad. Four days after the earthquake some small evacuation centers still lacked basic relief items

Instant noodles from Asian countries and canned food with which the Japanese were already familiar were also welcomed. These instant noodles came in packages similar to those sold in Japan but were in hot flavors. At first, Kobe relief officials were afraid they might be too hot and distributed just a small number of samples to evacuation centers. They turned out to be so popular that all the instant noodles were consumed in three days. People were getting bored with the basic food rations of rice balls and bread and welcomed this change of taste. Since these instant noodles can be cooked with one cup of boiling water, they served also as warm soup in the cold weather. Canned food and milk powder, which came in packaging familiar to the Japanese (international brand names or with picture labels of their contents) were quickly consumed. Rice crackers and cookies from Asian countries, already familiar to the Japanese, were also popular. However, some popular food items which came in large packages could not be used immediately. Some baby milk powder came in 20 kg bags, and the Hyogo Prefectural Government arranged for it to be transported to a food-processing factory for repacking into 1 kg cans. Tea which came in large cartons was also difficult to consume. Local relief workers wished that they were in small packets so that they could be easily handed out to individuals. Since the basic food requirements of the affected population were covered by rations of rice balls, bread, milk and lunch packs, additional food items from abroad were used as supplements to provide a change of taste.

Warm clothing was appreciated. Since most evacuation centers did not have adequate heating, great amounts of warm clothing were needed. Germany (whose consulate in Kobe had been damaged) noticed this need and purchased large quantities of sport training outfits locally in Japan, which they handed over to Kobe authorities. These were welcomed as workwear for persons cleaning debris away from inside or outside their houses. Cotton underwear in sizes appropriate for Japanese people were also welcomed. Because of a lack of water, people found it difficult to wash their clothes, and spare underwear was greatly appreciated. Woolen gloves and shawls were also welcomed as a 'warm gift' from developing countries in Asia. Stationery for children was also greatly appreciated.

I. Goods Difficult to Handle

Some NGOs sent perishable foods, which caused problems. Since the delivery of relief items was often delayed by traffic congestion, some bananas were black by the time they reached the evacuation centers.

Used clothing sent by NGOs caused another problem. In order for it to be of real use, volunteers had to sort and repack it by category (boys' winter wear for 4 to 8 year olds), which used up a great deal of manpower and storage space. Quantities of paper diapers were also donated by NGOs from abroad. The S size was quite popular, but the L size was too big for an average Japanese baby and could not be utilized.

Medium-size double-wall tents could be used, but not large-scale tents. High-quality tents 1,000 sq. meters in size were donated by an international NGO, but there was no empty open space in built-up Kobe to set up this gigantic tent. If there had

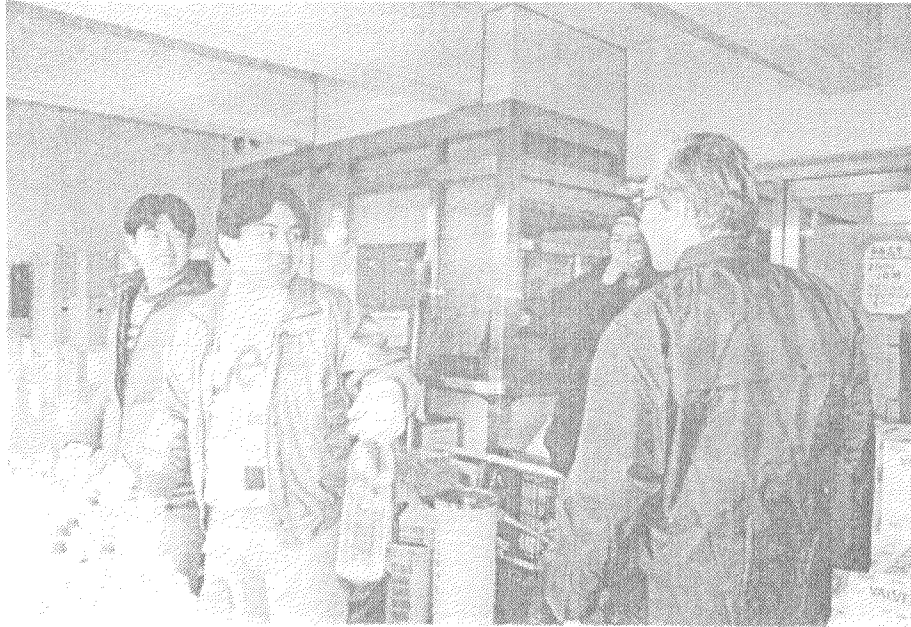


Photo 34 Bottled Mineral Water Distributed at Evacuation Centers
Easy to handle for distribution to individuals
Hyogo Prefectural Government



Photo 35 Paper Diapers L-Size in Stock
Too big for Japanese babies
photo S. Nishikawa