



## CAPACITAR *Letter from Japan*

Dear Friends,

October, 2018

Greetings from Japan where we have been offering trainings in different parts of the country. Capacitar started work in Japan five year ago focusing on trauma healing with people impacted by the 2011 tsunami, earthquake and Fukushima meltdown. With the leadership of Sr. Eiko Maki, CSJ, and her team, many thousands of people have received the benefit of Capacitar practices, in the Tohoku (tsunami) area, Sendai, Fukushima, Tokyo, Yamanashi, Kofu and other areas. Capacitar's work has also extended to groups committed to healing gender violence and to children and teachers in schools.

Synchronistically on the day that Christine Blasey Ford gave her testimony to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, we offered a workshop for Resilience, Community Wave and Satagaya Grief Support, groups working with survivors of sexual assault and gender violence. Citing government figures in an interview, Masako Ishii-Kuntz, professor of sociology at Ochanamizu University in Tokyo said: "One in three wives experiences some sort of domestic violence and one in twenty has a near-death experience. About 20% of female homicide victims are victims of domestic violence." According to UNODC statistics (U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime), Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea have the highest rates of female homicide in the world: 55% of female homicide victims in Asia are killed by their family members or intimate partners. Often women return to their abusive husbands — 60% of abused women do so in Japan. One of the most common reasons is because they lack financial resources to start a new life.

Traditionally because of shame, Japanese women never talked about the abuse they suffered, few knew of their legal or economic rights and very few stood up to ask for justice. When disasters like March 2011 hit,



*Pat Cane and Resilience Founder/Director Sachi Nakajima*

traumatic memories and body feelings of the past are re-awakened. Ms Masako Sako, founder of Community Wave said: "Capacitar arrived at the right time with the right kind of tools for Japan. Women could use the practices to heal their bodies and traumatic memories, without having to talk about the shameful experiences they have lived through."

At our recent training twenty-five women arrived in the pouring rain. Sachi Nakajima, JD, MSW, Founding Director of Resilience, spoke first about the impact of trauma on the body and the importance of talking about traumatic experiences to someone of confidence in order to heal and transform the pain. Sachi facilitates over 100 Resilience workshops a year as well as classes for high school and college students to prevent abusive relationships among



*Masako Sako sharing sushi and reflections*



*Ayako Takahashi and Chiemi Oikawa*



*Mr. Kaneta at the Ishinomaki workshop*

youth. Sachi also served as translator for my part of the presentation that gave the women tools to release the trauma and to heal their lives. It was gratifying to watch many of the participants begin to find relief as we practiced Switching, Fingerholds, Tapping and Protection Mudras. After the workshop the organizing team shared reflections over a delicious sushi lunch. Many of the team spoke of how Capacitar practices have become a significant part of their daily lives to help them manage feelings and memories and to live with peace in the present.

### **Work in the Tsunami Area**

Since 2013, Capacitar has offered workshops to people in Ishinomaki, Sendai, Ofunato and other areas devastated by the tsunami. Chiemi Oikawa and Ayako Takahashi have been part of Capacitar since the first training in Ishinomaki. They host regular Capacitar gatherings at a community center developed by a university professor from Tokyo who wanted to offer a place where people could come together for support. The center is a coffee house, a library for children and a place where workshops can be held. Tsunami survivors, people in temporary housing, as well as survivors of domestic violence (DV) meet regularly to learn the Capacitar practices and find support. Mr. Kaneta, a tsunami survivor, has come to all of our trainings in Ishinomaki. He described himself as very angry and traumatized after losing his home, friends and possessions. He was also frustrated as he fought government bureaucracy to get a settlement for his losses. After learning Capacitar practices he decided that he wanted to help some of the poor elderly also living in temporary housing. He took a class in foot reflexology and now visits the elderly to offer them foot massage. As he listens to their woes, he teaches them Capacitar Fingerholds and Tapping to ease their stress. He came to our recent workshop with big smiles, a happy man who now has a purpose for his life. He had just moved into permanent housing but still continues to reach out to the elderly in need. One other man who came to our workshop was running for city council in the next election. He described how he had lost his sister and two nieces in the tsunami. His nieces attended the school where the principal would not permit the children to climb to higher ground when the tsunami hit. They perished as well as his sister who was on her way to rescue her children.

### **Visit to the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant**

One of the fascinating experiences that Sr. Eiko had arranged during this trip was a visit to the Fukushima Power Plant with a small delegation of 6 women and 2 men connected to Caritas Minamisoma. In March 2011, when the tsunami waves hit the Tohoku coastline of Japan after the 9.0 earthquake, the Daiichi Power Plant was flooded. The backup generators used to pump water to cool the reactors were destroyed, causing a meltdown. Radioactive material spewed out of reactors 1, 2 and 3 contaminating a large area around the plant. Over 200,000 people in a 20-kilometer radius (approximately 10 mile area) were forced to evacuate, leaving behind everything because of contamination. People fled to other parts of Japan to live with relatives or were



relocated to temporary housing. As of March 2018, all temporary housing units have been closed by the government forcing people to find more permanent places to live. The government is encouraging people to return to their homes in the exclusion zone if radiation levels are deemed acceptable for living. However, many people are quite skeptical. As of March 2018, for example, only 500 out of 20,000 inhabitants of Nami have resettled in their town. In the redevelopment plans for the area, the government has defined three zones: Red or Pink Zones (where lodging and entry are prohibited); Yellow or Orange Zones (with restricted residency, but entry is permitted and businesses are partially open); and Green Zones (where entry is permitted, some businesses are open and lodging is partly permitted).

Mr. Yonezawa Tomohide, who works at Caritas Minamisoma, met Sr. Eiko and me at the train station and drove around the area to show us the reality. We traveled along one of the few main roads open to traffic, passing through areas that were like ghost towns. Houses and business stood empty, some partially destroyed by the earthquake, with everything inside abandoned as on the day of the evacuation. Rice and vegetable fields that had once yielded abundant crops were overgrown with weeds. Many side roads into residences and businesses were barricaded with police checkpoints prohibiting entry into the radioactive areas. Two of the women in our delegation had lost their homes and all their possessions and could never return to their community. Mr. Yonezawa spoke of the pain and trauma of many who come to Caritas for support in their struggle to relocate or get a settlement from the government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), owner of the Fukushima Power Plants. As we passed through one of the towns there was a large sign “New Life, Just”. Only 800 people have returned here, out of 20,000 residents before. In some places like Odaka, people can come back to their homes but as farmers they can't plant vegetables or rice or work in their fields because of the radiation.

As we passed many communities like Odaka and Tomioko we saw mounds of large black plastic bags. In the decontamination efforts by the government, several inches (5 centimeters) of exposed topsoil were scraped off everywhere in the area and put into the black plastic bags (each 1 cubic meter in size). Over the last 7 years the black bags have been piled up around homes and communities waiting to be transported to designated sites in Fukushima as well as other parts of Japan. Approximately 20 million black bags have been stored in over 150,000 locations in Fukushima alone. The challenge is what to do with the black bags filled with radioactive material that will last for hundreds of years. Some bags have been buried with a clean layer of soil on top of the mound. The government has plans to remove all of the black bags from Fukushima Prefecture by March 2045.

As part of the tour, we stopped at the TEPCO center for an hour lecture given by one of the official representatives who explained the design of the nuclear reactors, the meltdown, the water seepage under the reactors and the methods that are currently being used for containment of radioactive water (including an ice wall to block the seepage). Currently over 900,000 tons of contaminated water is stored in nearly one thousand large tanks around the Daiichi Plant, with 80% of these tanks exceeding the permitted limit of radiation. Measures are being taken to decontaminate the water and eventually release it into the Pacific Ocean. However fishermen and residents are opposed to this release.

After the lecture TEPCO staff measured each of us for our current level of radiation and gave us vests, dosimeters and gloves for protection. They then led us onto a TEPCO bus and drove us on a tour of the power plant that is



*Fukushima survivors visiting the plant*



*Abandoned barricaded business*



*Police checkpoint on a road to homes*

currently in the process of cleanup. Our guide described the process of decommissioning the reactors that is projected to take some thirty to forty years. Currently about 4500 men and approximately 50 women work at the power plant involved in the clean up and administration. A number of workers are hired by contract construction companies. According to our TEPCO guide, most of the employees are Japanese, although there are also foreign workers. When we asked about cancer and how many people have died, our TEPCO guide said that “no one has died,” although most recently a death from leukemia was reported in the papers. Statistics vary about deaths in the area: apart from radiation, several thousand people, in particular the elderly, have died from extreme stress, suicide and interruption of medical care caused by the meltdown and evacuation.

The Daiichi Power Plant that overlooks a beautiful area of the Pacific Ocean, appeared surreal, even though TEPCO has covered some of the destruction with protective walls painted with images of clouds. Out of the 48 plants that were shut down after the 3/11 disaster, Japan currently has eight functioning nuclear power plants that were reopened after more rigorous regulations and inspections.

### **Blessings and Hope for the Future**

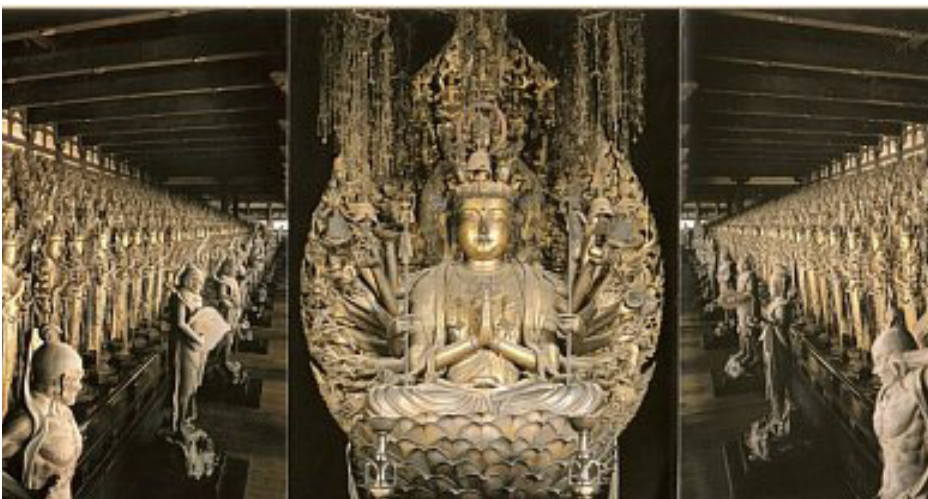
Near the end of our time in Japan, Sr, Eiko and I visited the beautiful temples of Koryu ji and Sanjusankendo in Kyoto. These ancient sites are dedicated to Kannon, the Merciful One who is the Buddhist Goddess of Compassion. Kannon, also known as Quan Yin in China and Tara in India, is the Enlightened One who came back to earth committed to transforming human suffering until the last being was also enlightened. In the magnificent wooden statue of Kannon in Koryu ji, she appears with eleven faces above her head to better see all aspects of human suffering today. Stretching out from her sides, Kannon has 42 arms with hands holding the tools she offers us to heal the world. At Sanjusankendo where there are 1000 statues of Kannon, Sr. Eiko and I reflected that the energy of Kannon is now being channeled through the thousands of people of Capacitar who offer tools of healing and transformation to many places of suffering around the world. At this moment members of the Capacitar Indonesia network are planning to go to Palu, Sulawesi, to offer trauma healing to the survivors of the recent tsunami and earthquake. The Indonesia team also worked in Lombok with survivors of the August earthquake. So Kannon, the Compassionate One, is alive in many places where Capacitar works!

May each of us see ourselves as reflections of Kannon, the Compassionate One, committing ourselves to be instruments of peace and healing wherever we are!

With peace and solidarity,

*Pat Cane*

Capacitar Founder/Director



*Kannon, the Compassionate One, offering us tools and gifts to heal the world—Kyoto*



*Sr. Eiko Maki ringing the Bell of Empowerment*