

The Japan Times **NEWS**

Children wait for meals to be distributed by a charitable group in a refugee area for victims of Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban City, central Philippines, last Friday. | AP

NATIONAL

Japan doctors donate new medical building to typhoon-hit city in Philippines

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TACLOBAN CITY, PHILIPPINES – A nonprofit medical organization based in Japan is donating funds for a new building to be used by a doctors' group in the central Philippines that had its headquarters destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan last year.

Tomoko Iwamoto of the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia said the building will also serve as the Okayama-based donor group's emergency relief center in the Philippines, should the need ever arise.

The two-story structure in a prosperous area in Tacloban City is projected to cost ¥10 million and should be finished in five or six months. Tacloban was devastated by the typhoon on Nov. 8 last year, with the death toll reaching the thousands and wide swaths of the city destroyed.

Most of the funds for the new building are coming from the Japan Medical Association and the Fukuyama City Medical Association.

Iwamoto said her organization decided to donate a new building to the medical society while conducting emergency relief assistance in the aftermath of Haiyan and learning that its headquarters had not survived.

"If we rebuild their building, we won't only contribute to the local people through the Leyte Medical Society, we can also potentially contribute more in case another disaster happens in the future, because this would now be our main focal point," Iwamoto said.

Maria Elvira Casal, the president of the Leyte Medical Society, said her organization's membership of more than 500 physicians will use the building for conferences and scientific sessions. They will also use it as a venue for future medical missions.

"You're a dream come true for all of us," Casal told Iwamoto during a groundbreaking ceremony.

The Association of Medical Doctors of Asia conducted relief efforts for Haiyan victims starting last December.

It also participated in volunteer medical missions organized by the Leyte Medical Society from March to October of this year.

Regarded as the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines in living memory, Haiyan left 6,300 people dead, more than 1,000 missing and some 4.1 million displaced in the central Philippines.

It caused massive damage to infrastructure, agriculture and other sectors that the government estimates will cost 89 billion pesos (around \$2 billion) to replace or repair.

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