



East Japan Earthquake Heritage Sites

Tohoku and Kanto Regions, Japan

On March, 11, 2011, a powerful earthquake struck off the northeast coast of Japan. In the wake of the catastrophic tsunami, many thousands lost their lives and millions were left without electricity and water. In response to this humanitarian crisis the recovery effort was prompt and urgent, but it is expected to take many years to complete. While the earthquake's toll on the people of Japan has been well noted in the press, the conservation and restoration of significant cultural sites is a high priority that can be highlighted through the Watch and can be catalytic in securing necessary funding and technical expertise.

The repair and restoration of built heritage has proved to be an important social element for communities recovering from disaster. According to Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, more than 700 national landmarks were damaged by the earthquake. The heritage sites that were affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake were included on the World Monuments Watch in 2012. Through the two-year Watch cycle, WMF provided substantial assistance for the restoration of nationally significant structures in two historic communities in the Tohoku and Kanto regions. The East Japan Earthquake Heritage Sites are included again on the 2014 Watch to underscore the magnitude of the recovery effort and the continued need for collaboration, and to highlight the importance of this effort for the affected communities.