



Children return to school and play in disaster affected Japan

One month after the M9 earthquake forced a tsunami on coastal areas of Japan, massive efforts are being made to bring normalcy back to the lives of children.

(11 April 2011) Efforts by government and local authorities, along with international NGOs such as Save the Children, are already reaching the badly affected population. To date, Save the Children has established 19 child friendly spaces in evacuation centers in the disaster affected areas of Miyagi and Iwate. Save the Children estimates that 74,000 children were evacuated from their homes, following the earthquake and the tsunami.

“As populations continue to relocate, Save the Children will disperse resources to ensure that amidst the continuing chaos and unfamiliar environments, our child friendly spaces are there to support children. In the devastated regions of Iwate and Miyagi, we are working in close co-ordination with the Prefectural Government Emergency Response Co-ordination team, and other coordination bodies such as Japan Platform, to target the needs that are currently not being met”, says Hiro Shibuya, CEO of Save the Children Japan.

Across Japan, schools are opening for the new school year, but many children living in the towns and cities along the coast have lost everything, schools have been destroyed and sadly it has been reported that many teachers have lost their lives. “We have started supporting schoolchildren by providing them with back-to-school kits to replace items such as pens, notebooks, rulers and school bags that have been swept away. And we are collaborating with the Board of Education in Miyagi to find solutions to support children who are currently unable to go back to school”, Shibuya adds. Save the Children will provide a total of 5500 school kits to children whose school items were washed away in the tsunami.

Plans are underway for the recovery and reconstruction of tsunami affected areas. The government of Japan has set a target of constructing 30,000 temporary housing units in the next two months, while acknowledging that the needs are much larger. Save the Children has established a 3 year plan to support children and their families on the road to recovery.

“We will collaborate with the community and support family and parents over the long term with our focus on child protection and education”, says Hiro Shibuya.