

--Press Release --

Children want to participate in the post-tsunami recovery process
Save the Children surveys 15,000 children from tsunami affected areas

Tokyo, October 1, 2012. International aid agency Save the Children has surveyed over 15,000 children on the recovery process in post-tsunami Japan. The survey asked children if they wished to or had participated in the recovery process, and explored how and why they did or didn't participate.

About 70% of children interviewed in Save the Children's June 2012 "Hear Our Voice" survey said that they wanted to play a role in the recovery process. Whilst children showed a high interest in participating in the recovery efforts, only 57% of children had actually been able to participate in the recovery process in some way. As a female high school senior at Rikuzentakata-city responded, "Please let me know if there is anything I can do for the recovery. I am ready to put the feeling of being a victim aside and do something."

Of the children who responded, "I don't want to participate" or "I have not participated," the two most common reasons given were "I don't know what to do" or "I never had a chance to." These results could point towards a lack of information and available opportunities for children to participate in the recovery process.

A female 6th grader from the coastal town of Ishinomaki-city said, "I may be too young but I, as well as other people around me, want to participate in the recovery. We may not be able to achieve something big, but we can at least start with contributing little by little." She continued, "The adults don't know how the children perceive the recovery or how we are feeling. If the adults and children cooperate with each other, the possibilities are infinite. So, I want the adults to start by trusting us enough to involve us in the recovery process."

Even though a year and a half has passed since the tsunami, more than 300,000 people are still living in temporary housing communities, often set up in schoolyards and parks, limiting children's space to play. As a part of its five-year programme in Japan, Save the Children is highlighting children's participation in the recovery process. The charity has created Children's Community Building Clubs with local communities in the areas hardest hit by the earthquake and tsunami.

With support from Save the Children, children in the clubs develop their own versions of the recovery plans they would like to see for their towns. On February 25th, a group of child representatives from the clubs traveled to Tokyo to present their recovery plans to Japan's Minister for Reconstruction. Also, the club members joined the World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction in Tohoku, held on July 3, 2012 in Sendai. The children presented their opinions about disaster risk reduction to an international audience including Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) of the United Nations, and Bouna Semou, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Senegal to Japan.

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<http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/index.html>

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