

Two Years after the Earthquake:  
Reflect the Voices of Children in the Reconstruction of Their Communities

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*Tokyo, March 8, 2013.* International aid agency Save the Children would like to share with you a report of the progress in the recovery effort made by Save the Children Japan (SC Japan) last year.

SC Japan supports children and their parents in disaster affected areas to resume their day-to-day lives and aims to build a society with children, in which children can express their opinions and participate in reconstructing their communities. To achieve these goals, SC Japan has developed support activities in three prefectures, Iwate, Fukushima, and Miyagi, and provided assistance to about 85,000 people (as of December 31, 2012). In the second year after the earthquake, in addition to the three core programs, Education, Child Protection, and Creating Child-Friendly Communities, SC Japan also focused on two other programs: the Disaster Risk Reduction program, which covers the three programs in a cross-sectorial manner, and the Community Grants Initiative, which promotes cooperation with local NPOs and others to strengthen the organization's foundation.

In its activities, SC Japan has always tried to provide children, who are members of the community, with opportunities to speak out their opinions and participate in society for the reconstruction of their communities. As a place where children can convey their opinions on reconstruction, and where both children and adults can share their thoughts, as of last year, SC Japan had organized the Tohoku Children's Community-Building Summit three times. Over time, the children talked about their wishes such as "We children also have many opinions so I hope our opinions are reflected in the reconstruction and politics!" and "I want to have this kind of opportunity more often, because we are not able to speak out without participating in these events." Such voices from children make us clearly recognize that they not only have to be supported but also play a main role in the recovery.

Following the survey carried out immediately after the earthquake, SC Japan conducted another survey to listen to the voices of children. In 2012, opinions on

reconstruction and community building from about 15,000 children were heard, which is 1.5 times the previous year's figure. In addition, SCJ also concentrate on making policy proposals, by supporting children in submitting their opinion statements to the Reconstruction Agency as well as their proposals to Ms. Margareta Walstrom, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (for Disaster Risk Reduction), to let their opinions be reflected in the policies. Moreover, aiming to build an international framework to guarantee children's rights with respect to disaster risk reduction, SC Japan has raised two points for proposed agenda at the 3<sup>rd</sup> United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015: 1) to ensure that the voices of the children be heard and reflected in the post Hyogo Framework for Action and 2) to include technical/complex disasters such as Fukushima nuclear power plant accident in the post Hyogo Framework for Action.

SC Japan has provided humanitarian assistance throughout the world, and conducts its activities in children's best interest under any circumstances. Last year, SC Japan opened an office in Fukushima prefecture, and since then the organization has been working at full capacity, aiming to help children deal with the radiation risks and changes to their lives brought about as a result of the nuclear accident, while listening to their voices.

Although some international NGOs have been pulling out of disaster affected areas, SC Japan will continue listening to children's voices to achieve reconstruction that reflects children's opinions, based on the Five-Year Plan defined in May 2011. To prevent our memories of the earthquake from fading away, and to deliver the voices of children playing a main role in the reconstruction process, SC Japan would like to ask you in the media for your continuous understanding and cooperation.

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