

Results of “Hear Our Voice 7: Attitude Survey on Children’s Participation 2012” Prompt Report (as of Sept. 7th, 2012)

Save the Children Japan (SCJ), the world's leading independent organization for children, has been working on the “Speaking Out from Tohoku (SOFT)” project since May 2011 as part of its Great East Japan Earthquake Recovery Programme. Through this programme, children have been actively participating in the planning to rebuild their communities. By involving children who are members of the community in the planning and recovery process, we aim to create “child-friendly communities.”

The “Hear Our Voice 1: Attitude Survey on Children’s Participation”^{*1} was conducted from May to June 2011. The survey targeted 11,000 children from 4th graders to high school students in five areas in Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures. The results showed that about 90% of the children who survived the disaster were interested in playing an active role in community planning for their own communities.

SCJ is planning on conducting further surveys to hear the voices of community members, young and old, about children’s participation in the community, and eventually to encourage children’s participation in community planning. Please take a moment to listen to the opinions of the 11,000 children about participating in the recovery process of their communities.

We would like to thank everybody who helped us with this project, including the children who participated in our survey, the government, schools and other concerned organizations.

*1: “Hear Our Voice 1: Attitude Survey on Children’s Participation”
http://www.savechildren.or.jp/scjcms/sc_activity.php?d=434 (in Japanese)

I. Survey Overview

1. Purpose of the Survey

To understand the opinions of children on participating in the recovery process for their communities. Also important was to understand how adults perceived children’s participation, as adult support is essential for children to actually participate.

2. Details of the Survey

Target Area: Yamada-town (Iwate Prefecture), Rikuzentakata-city (Iwate Prefecture), Ishinomaki-city (Miyagi Prefecture), where SCJ has been implementing the “Children’s Community Building Clubs” project.

Target Population:

- Children – 16,171 students (4th grade and up) who attend schools in the target areas (a total of 108 schools: 60 elementary schools, 29 junior high school, 15 high schools, and 4 special support education schools).
- Adults – all households in the affected areas (69,782 units).

Survey Method:

- Children – 1) Elementary and junior high schools: the survey was mailed out through the Board of Education and instructions were given by teachers.
2) High Schools: The survey was mailed directly to the schools and instructions were given by teachers.
3) Special support education schools: Detailed instructions were given by teachers as required.
- Adults – With help from the local government the survey was mailed out to all households in the target areas. One representative (aged 19 or over) from each unit was asked to fill out the survey.

Survey Period: June 19 to August 1, 2012.

Number of Valid Responses: 14,600 children and 5,296 adults.

II. Results

1. Children

A summary of the results is shown below (please see section III for more details):

- a. The results show that children had a high interest in “participating in the recovery of the community” as with the 2011 survey. Although almost 70% of children answered that they do “want to participate in the recovery of the community,” the percentage has actually declined since the 2011 survey. The main reason given for not wanting to participate in the recovery of the community was that they were “busy.” This could indicate that normalcy in the children’s lives is slowly but surely being rebuilt.
- b. Whilst children showed a high interest in participating in the recovery efforts, the results reveal that a low percentage of the children actually have participated in the recovery process.
- c. The majority of children who responded “I don’t want to participate” or “I have not participated” gave their reasons as “I don’t know what to do” or “I never had a chance to.” This could be attributed to the fact that there has been a lack of information and opportunities available for children to participate.
- d. Those who are aware of SCJ’s Children’s Community Building Clubs were more likely to respond that they “want to participate in the recovery” and that they “have actually participated.”

2. Adults^{*2}

- a. A high percentage of adults answered “yes” to the questions, “the children want to participate in the recovery of the community” and “the children have participated in some activities for the recovery.” When asked about what constituted “some activities,” many adults said that the children were “talking to people or sending out some message about the recovery” and/or “participated in community events.”
- b. The main reasons given as to why “children don’t want to participate in the recovery” or “have done nothing for the recovery” were that the children “don’t know what to do,” they “never had a chance to,” and that they have been “busy.”
- c. The following additional multiple choice questions were only asked of adults:
 - 4) What do you think about children participating in the recovery of the community?
 - 5) Would you like to help children participate in the recovery?
 - 6) Do you think children’s opinions are reflected in the recovery of the community?
 - 7) Do you think you listen to children on a regular basis?The majority of adults responded affirmatively to questions 4 and 5, indicating that they are generally in favor of children participating in the recovery. More than half of the adults also expressed an affirmative response to the question 7.
- d. Only a few adults responded affirmatively to question 6. So whilst adults answered “yes” to children participating in the recovery of the community and “listening to children on a regular basis”, it appears that adults don’t actually pay enough attention to children’s opinions when it comes to the recovery of the community.

***2: Limitations of the Survey**

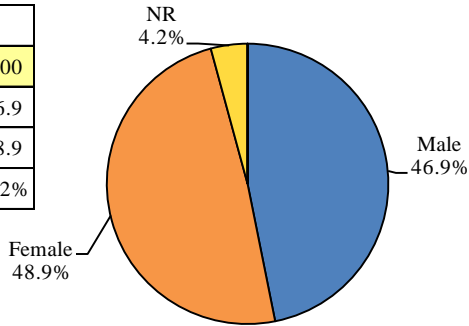
For this survey, contact lists for all adults in the target communities were required. However, being a NGO, SCJ has no access to such personal information. SCJ mailed out the survey to all households in the target areas with the help of the local government. Unfortunately, response collection was very limited, and this may have caused a positive bias in the results. Thus, the survey results from adults are only used as a reference in this context.

III. Survey Questions and Results

1. Please tell us about yourself

1) Gender

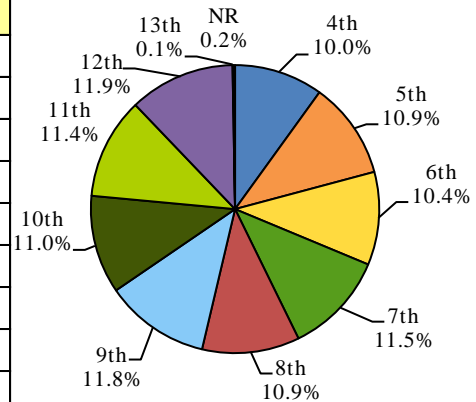
	Number	%
Total	14,600	100
Male	6,841	46.9
Female	7,144	48.9
Non-response (NR)	615	4.2%



*3: Please see the note below about "Non-response".

2) Grade

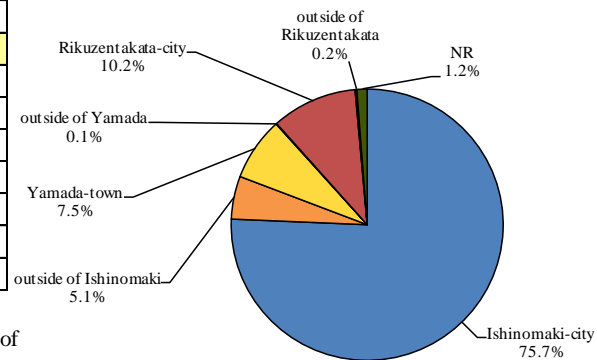
	Number	%
Total	14,600	100
4th (Elementary School)	1,453	10.0
5th (Elementary School)	1,589	10.9
6th (Elementary School)	1,525	10.4
7th (Junior High School Freshman)	1,675	11.5
8th (Junior High School Junior)	1,596	10.9
9th (Junior High School Senior)	1,719	11.8
10th (High School Freshman)	1,609	11.0
11th (High School Junior)	1,662	11.4
12th (High School Senior)	1,731	11.9
13th (Extra Year in High School)	14	0.1
Non-response (NR)	27	0.2



*4: Please see the note below about grade 13.

3) Area

	Number	%
Total	14,600	100
Ishinomaki-city	11,047	75.7
outside of Ishinomaki	747	5.1
Yamada-town	1,100	7.5
outside of Yamada	13	0.1
Rikuzentakata-city	1,485	10.2
outside of Rikuzentakata	30	0.2
Non-response (NR)	178	1.2



*5: Please see the note below for an explanation of "outside of Ishinomaki", "outside of Yamada," and "outside of Rikuzentakata".

*3: The survey distributed in Ishinomaki-city included a "refuse to answer" option in the gender question to accommodate sexual minorities. The surveys for Yamada-town and Rikuzentakata-city did not contain this option. This created some inconsistency in the data. Those who chose "refused to answer" were counted as "non-response" for this question.

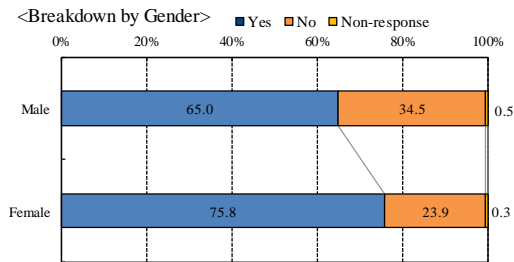
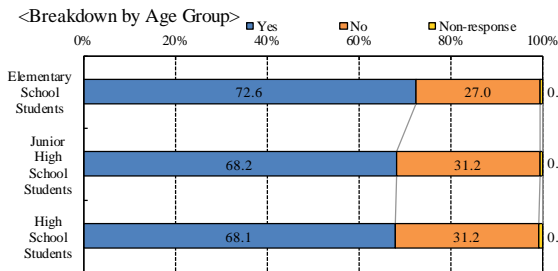
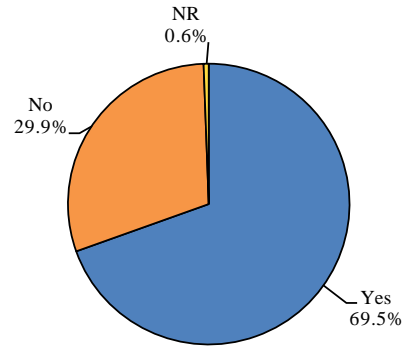
*4: Grade 13 is for students attending part-time high school where it usually takes four years to finish, as opposed to three years at a regular high school.

*5: “Outside of Ishinomaki,” “outside of Yamada,” and “outside of Rikuzentakata” designated those students who commute to schools in Ishinomaki, Yamada, and Rikuzentakata, but live outside of those areas.

2.1. Do you want to participate in the recovery of your own community?

A total of 10,152 (69.5%) children chose “yes” to this question. Elementary school students had a higher rate of “yes” response than junior high school and high school students. Females had an 11% higher rate of “yes” response than males.

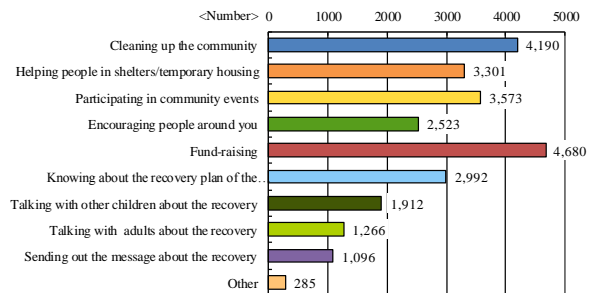
	Number	%
Total	14,600	100
Yes	10,152	69.5
No	4,363	29.9
Non-response (NR)	85	0.6



2.2. If your answer is “yes,” what would you like to do? (Please check as many as apply.)

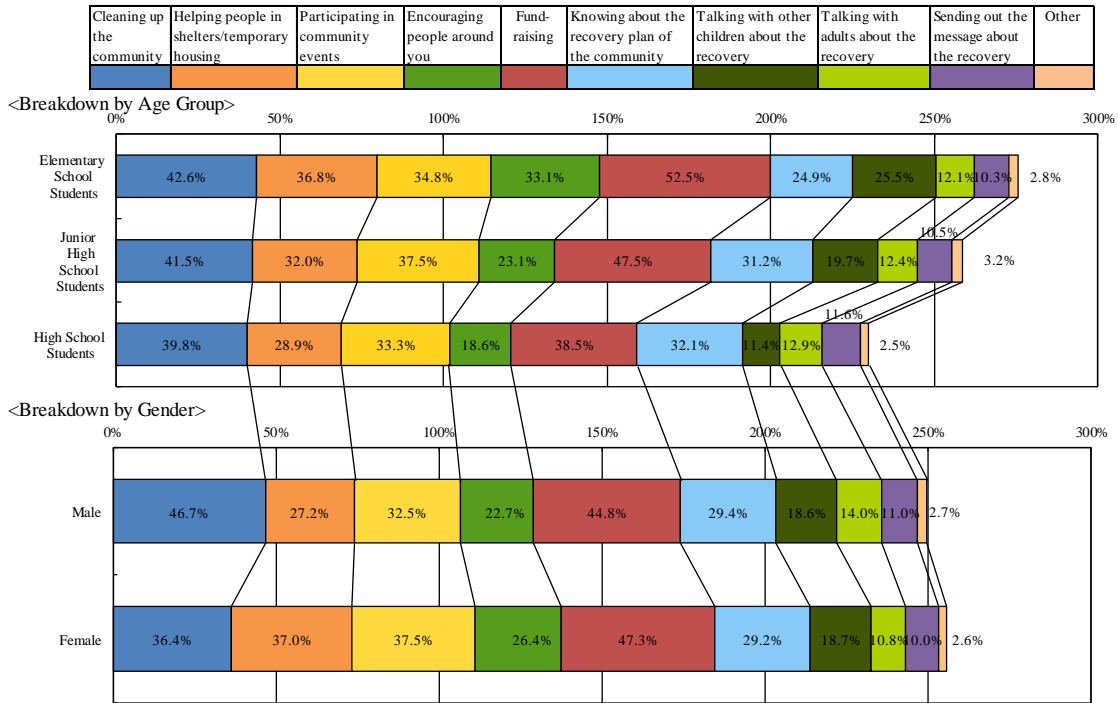
The most common responses were “fund-raising” and “cleaning up the community.” Almost a third of children chose “knowing about the recovery plan of the community,” that showed a high interest in the recovery of the community. By age group, “talking with other children about the recovery” was a very common response among the elementary school students, while “knowing about the recovery plan of the community” was a more common answer among junior high school and high school students.

	Number	%
Total	10,152	
Cleaning up the community	4,190	41.3
Helping people in shelters/temporary housing	3,301	32.5
Participating in community events	3,573	35.2
Encouraging people around you	2,523	24.9
Fund-raising	4,680	46.1
Knowing about the recovery plan of the community	2,992	29.5
Talking with other children about the recovery	1,912	18.8
Talking with adults about the recovery	1,266	12.5
Sending out the message about the recovery	1,096	10.8
Other	285	2.8
Non-Response	73	0.7



* The total exceeds 100% as multiple responses are allowed

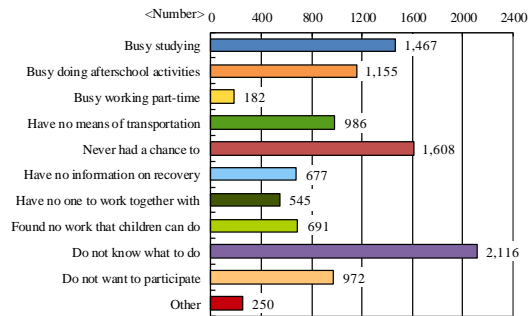
Breakdown by Groups



2.3. If your answer is “no,” please specify the reason. (Please check as many as apply.)

The most common responses were “do not know what to do,” and “never had a chance to,” which may indicate that children were not motivated to participate due to a lack of information and/or opportunities. A high percentage of children, especially those in junior high school and high school, chose “busy studying,” or “busy doing after school activities,” which may indicate that normalcy in children’s lives is slowly but surely being rebuilt.

	Number	%
Total	4,363	
Busy studying	1,467	33.6
Busy doing afterschool activities	1,155	26.5
Busy working part-time	182	4.2
Have no means of transportation	986	22.6
Never had a chance to	1,608	36.9
Have no information on recovery	677	15.5
Have no one to work together with	545	12.5
Found no work that children can do	691	15.8
Do not know what to do	2,116	48.5
Do not want to participate	972	22.3
Other	250	5.7
Non-Response	67	1.5

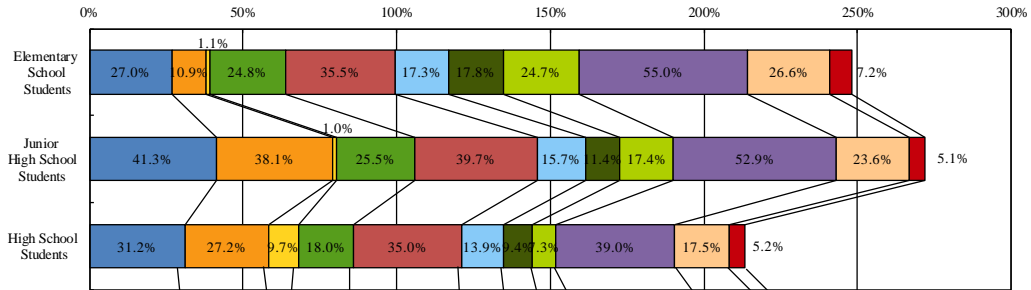


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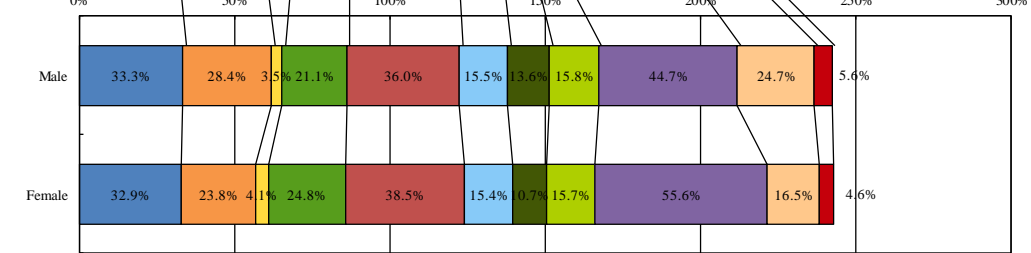
Breakdown by Groups

Busy studying	Busy doing afterschool activities	Busy working part-time	Have no means of transportation	Never had a chance to	Have no information on recovery	Have no one to work together with	Found no work that children can do	Do not know what to do	Do not want to participate	Other
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<Breakdown by Age Group>



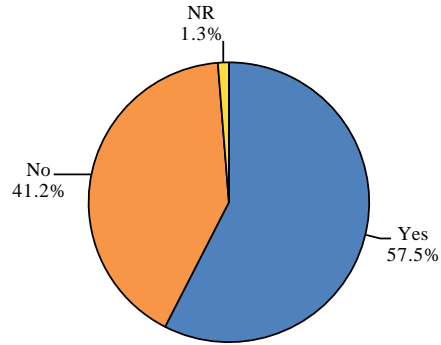
<Breakdown by Gender>



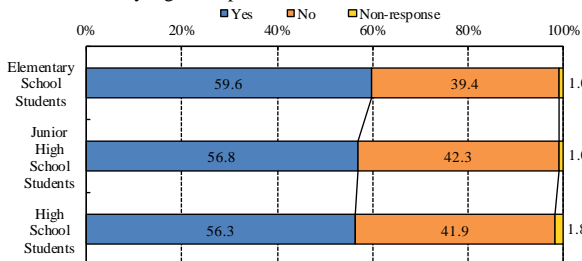
3.1. Have you done anything for the recovery of your community?

A total of 8,398 children responded “yes.” This is 12% less than those who responded “yes” to question 2.1 “do you want to participate in the recovery of your own community?”

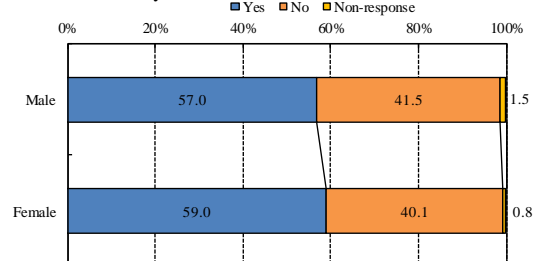
	Number	%
Total	14,600	100
Yes	8,398	57.5
No	6,018	41.2
Non-response (NR)	184	1.3



<Breakdown by Age Group>



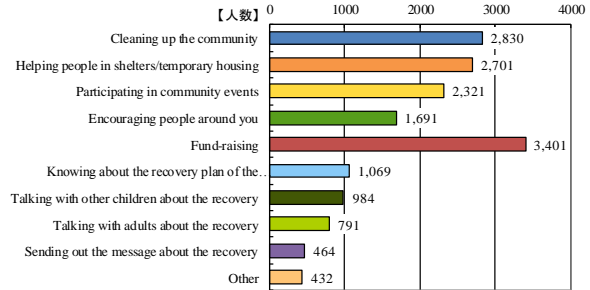
<Breakdown by Gender>



3.2. If your answer is “yes,” what did you do? (Please check as many as apply.)

The most common answer across all students was “fund-raising.” Among high school students “cleaning the community” and “helping people in shelters/temporary housing” were the two predominant answers. Those who chose “knowing about the recovery plan of the community” was 17% lower than those who chose that response for question 2.2.

	Number	%
Total	8,398	
Cleaning up the community	2,830	33.7
Helping people in shelters/temporary housing	2,701	32.2
Participating in community events	2,321	27.6
Encouraging people around you	1,691	20.1
Fund-raising	3,401	40.5
Knowing about the recovery plan of the community	1,069	12.7
Talking with other children about the recovery	984	11.7
Talking with adults about the recovery	791	9.4
Sending out the message about the recovery	464	5.5
Other	432	5.1
Non-Response	54	0.6

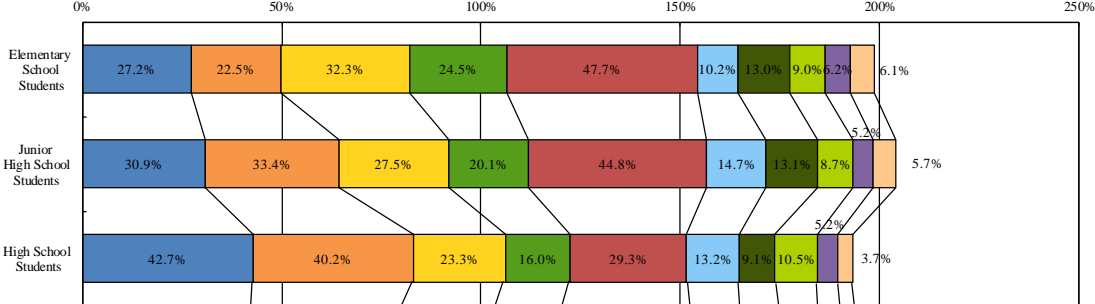


* The total exceeds 100% as multiple responses are allowed

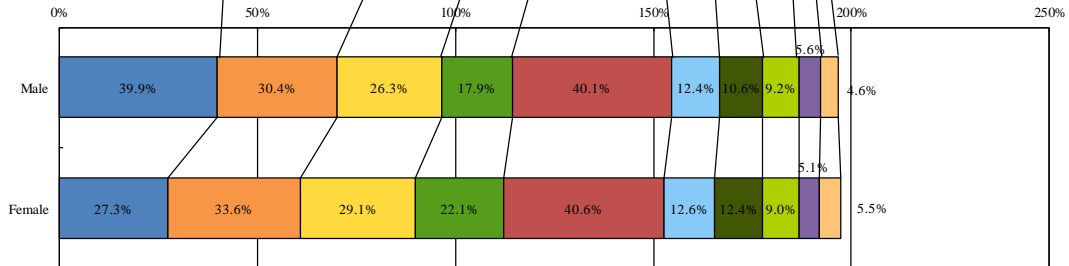
Breakdown by Groups

Cleaning up the community	Helping people in shelters/temporary housing	Participating in community events	Encouraging people around you	Fund-raising	Knowing about the recovery plan of the community	Talking with other children about the recovery	Talking with adults about the recovery	Sending out the message about the recovery	Other
Blue	Orange	Yellow	Green	Red	Light Blue	Dark Green	Purple	Brown	Tan

<Breakdown by Age Group>

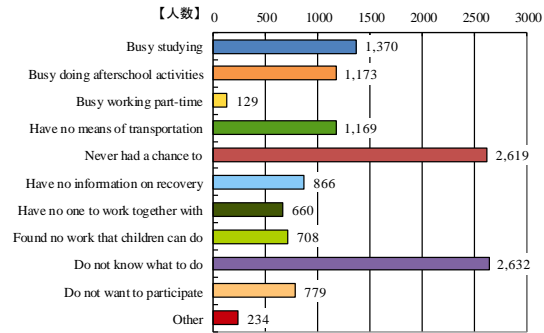


<Breakdown by Gender>



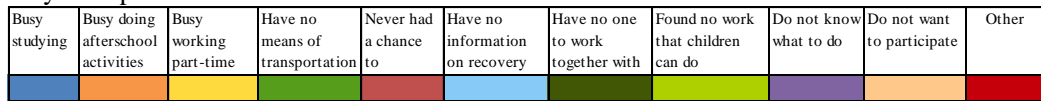
3.3. If your answer is “no,” please specify the reason. (Please check as many as apply.)
 “Never had a chance to” and “do not know what to do” were the two equally predominant answers. If lack of information and/or opportunities were the reasons why children felt they could not participate, it could represent the main reason hindering children’s participation. The next most common answers were “busy studying” and “ busy doing after school activities,” especially among junior high school and high school students. Junior high school students displayed the highest rate of responding “busy.” “Have no means of transportation” may indicate that children do not have access to events due to an insufficient public transportation system post-disaster.

	Number	%
Total	6,018	
Busy studying	1,370	22.8
Busy doing afterschool activities	1,173	19.5
Busy working part-time	129	2.1
Have no means of transportation	1,169	19.4
Never had a chance to	2,619	43.5
Have no information on recovery	866	14.4
Have no one to work together with	660	11.0
Found no work that children can do	708	11.8
Do not know what to do	2,632	43.7
Do not want to participate	779	12.9
Other	234	3.9
Non-Response	205	3.4

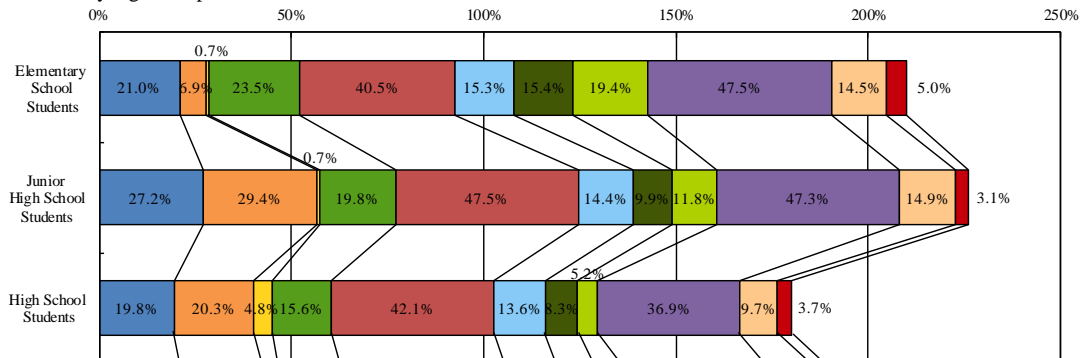


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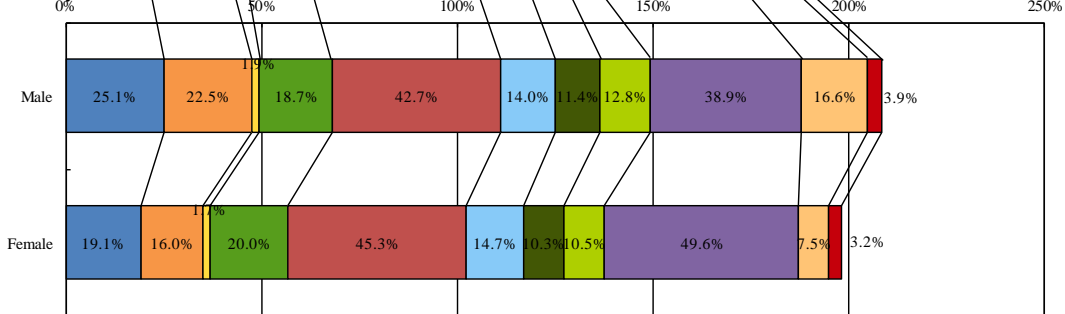
Breakdown by Groups



<Breakdown by Age Group>



<Breakdown by Gender>



4. Please write a message to the adults about the recovery of your community.

A total of 7,984 children responded to this question. The most common topics were: the future of their community, appreciation for the support provided, encouragement to the affected areas, rebuilding facilities and infrastructure, and children's participation in the recovery.

Examples are as follows:

- I want the whole nation to know that we are working hard to rebuild our community. (High school freshman, male, Ishinomaki-city).
- Matsubara (a famous two-kilometer stretch of shoreline that was lined with approximately 70,000 pines) will be restored. (5th grader, male, Rikuzentakata-city).
- Not only the adults but also we the children are having a hard time, so now it's time to help each other. (Junior high school senior, female, Ishinomaki-city).
- 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. 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. I hate it when people say, "I can't do it because I am still a child." So I want both adults and children to work together for the recovery. (6th grader, female, Ishinomaki-city).
- 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. (High school senior, female, Rikuzentakata-city).
- I wish there were more opportunities for children to participate. (High school freshman, female, Ishinomaki-city).
- I really appreciate the fact that a lot of adults took their precious time for the recovery of our city of Rikuzentakata. They have been working on the disposal of rubble, but as for the complete recovery of the city, please leave it up to us, the future adults. We will always remember the wishes of our community and will make it happen. (Junior high school junior, female, Rikuzentakata-city).
- I appreciate those who are working on the recovery. I am looking forward to seeing what our town will become in the future. (4th grader, male, Yamada-town).
- I understand the need for temporary housing, but I think they are taking up too much space and depriving the children of places to play. (High school freshman, female, Ishinomaki-city).
- I want a school. I want the cracks on the street to be fixed. (5th grader, male, Ishinomaki-city).
- It was sad to see people from other prefectures on TV saying that they don't want rubble that was exposed to radiation. We live in the area with the rubble that they were talking about. I understand that they are worried about the radiation, but it made me feel a little sad. (Junior high school freshman, female, Rikuzentakata-city).
- I see "Ganbare (meaning "do your best" in Japanese) Tohoku!" written everywhere, but the fact is that we have been doing our best already, so we don't want others to tell us to do more. I want it to be changed to something else. (5th grade, female, Ishinomaki-city).
- Please do not get the children involved in the politics of the adults. Our opinions should be heard, and the adults should not use the disaster as an excuse to act selfishly. I will do anything, so please let the children participate. (Junior high school senior, female, Yamada-town).

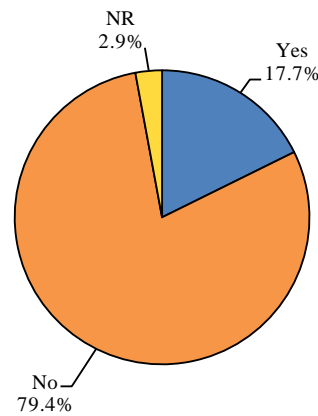
- I want those who are complaining about the food from Fukushima or about the rubble to instead focus on helping those who are in need. (Junior high school junior, male, Ishinomaki-city).
- It doesn't matter what I write here. (High school senior, male, Ishinomaki-city).
- I hope you are not one of those people who are incurious about the recovery. (Junior high school freshman, male, Ishinomaki-city).
- Is Yamada-machi really making progress in the recovery? What about my future? Is our voice really getting heard? (Junior high school junior, female, Yamada-machi).

*6: All of the children's responses will be available on the SCJ's homepage by the middle of October 2012.

5. Are you aware of SCJ's "Children's Community Building Clubs"?

A total of 2,582 (17.7%) answered "yes" to this question.

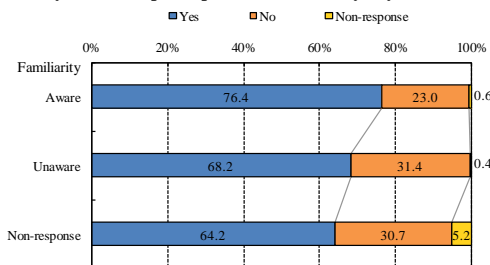
	Number	%
Total	14,600	100
Yes	2,582	17.7
No	11,594	79.4
Non-response (NR)	424	2.9



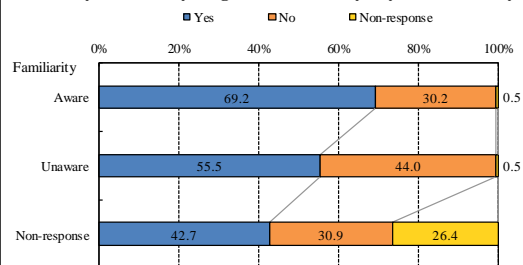
*7: "Children's Community Building Clubs" provide the children with the opportunity to participate in the recovery and rebuilding of their communities. They were established in June 2011, after the 2011 survey revealed a need for them. As of August 2012, clubs have been created in Yamada-machi (Iwate Prefecture), Tikuzentakata-city (Iwate Prefecture), and Ishinomaki-city (Miyagi Prefecture). Children from 5th graders to high school students organize weekly meetings to discuss the recovery process and the rebuilding of their communities.

We found an association between those familiar with the "Children's Community Building Clubs" and those actually participating in the recovery process. Those familiar with the clubs answered "yes" to both questions 2.1 "Do you want to participate in the recovery of your own community?" and 3.1 "have you done anything for the recovery of your community?" 10% more often than those who were unaware of the clubs.

2.1. Do you want to participate in the recovery of your own community?



3.1. Have you done anything for the recovery of your community?



IV. Professional Critique

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The children have been considered as an object to be protected in the history of post-disaster recovery in Japan. However, as the Committee on the Rights of the Child indicate, the right of the child to be heard and to participate “does not cease in situations of crisis or in their aftermath,” and for the children to keep expressing their opinions in the recovery process “helps them to regain control over their lives, contributes to rehabilitation, develops organizational skills and strengthens a sense of identity.” (Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12, 2009)

SCJ has conducted attitude surveys on children’s participation last year and this year to collect the authentic voices of 15,000 children in Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures. While there have been a lot of projects implemented by other organizations in the affected areas, there have been few surveys actually targeting the children involved in the recovery.

According to this survey, almost 70% of the children responded that they want to participate in the recovery of their own community. In the past, some surveys conducted by local government showed that almost no children wanted to participate in the process of making decisions on “important matters of the community,” and it is not the only case to show low interest by children. Having experienced the massive earthquake and tsunami, the children are driven to “participate in the recovery,” which could be a great asset to the recovery process.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children’s “views should be elicited in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.” For children to be heard in those processes, it is essential for adults to actually pay attention to them. It may be unrealistic for all local governments to conduct a survey targeting children. Thus, it could be a great start for not only the authorities but also all adults involved in the recovery process to take this survey seriously and utilize its results.

Survey Conducted by Save the Children Japan

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