

Children's Community Building Club Members Participating in the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction! (Nov. 3, 2012)

Three members of the Children's Community Building Club participated in the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 22-25 October, 2012. Their participation in the main conference marked the recognition of their past activities. As the Children's Community Building Club, they submitted written opinions to the heads of Iwate and Miyagi prefectures, and the leaders of three municipalities in both those prefectures in December 2011. They also submitted their written opinions to the Minister of Reconstruction in February, 2012. In July 2012, they submitted a written proposal to the world at the World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction! Below we report how the children of Tohoku "spoke out" to the world.

■ **October 21: Gathering of 17 colleagues from four Asian countries** ■

After discussion with other club members, three high school students from Yamada-machi of Iwate prefecture and Ishinomaki City of Miyagi prefecture participated in the conference as club representatives. At the conference they met for the first time with their colleagues from Indonesia, Cambodia, and the Philippines. Although nervous, the students took part in their orientation where they also enjoyed singing and dancing amid a flurry of English and the languages of each country.



"I would like to exchange many opinions with people from various countries."

■ **October 22: Exchange of ideas at the pre-conference for children and young people** ■

The students participated in a pre-conference meeting of 28 children and young people where they exchanged ideas about a "Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction," that was formulated last year. The Queen of Yogyakarta attended the pre-conference and listened to the students as they each reported on disaster risk reduction efforts in their own countries.



“I learned about efforts in disaster prevention in each country, and there were some that I thought should be adopted in Japan as well.”

■ **October 23: Promoting the activities in Japan at a side event** ■

When the main conference finally began, the students participated in the opening ceremony that was attended by representatives of each participating country. After the opening, the students presented their proposals-in-progress, and were able to share their thoughts and opinions at a side event called “Child-Focused Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia.” In addition, they met with Azuma Konno, Cabinet Office Disaster Management Deputy Minister. They asked many questions:

“I think disaster reduction education should be given, but what does (the Japanese government) think about disaster reduction education?”

“In regards to the efforts to listen to the opinions of children toward reconstruction [the written opinions submitted in Feb.], what has become of these since then?”



■ **October 24: Dialog with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General** ■

Together with their colleagues from other countries, the Tohoku students held a dialog with Ms. Margareta Wahlström, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and reported on their discussions at the pre-conference held on October 22. Ms. Wahlström remembered meeting with members of the Children's Community Building Club at the World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction in July. She gave them some encouraging words, saying "I will work my hardest in order to hold a children's conference at the United Nations Conference on Disaster Reduction which is scheduled to be held in 2015. Let's meet again then!"



■ **October 25: Announcement of a children's and young people's declaration at the closing ceremony** ■

A "Children's and Young People's Declaration" was announced at the closing ceremony that summed up the discussions that had occurred over the four days from October 21. In a method agreed upon by everyone, one young representative from Indonesia, Cambodia, Japan, and the Philippines (two male, two female) were nominated, and these four representatives presented the declaration. In her speech, Ms. Margareta Wahlström, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, "It is the first time for children to have participated in a conference related to disaster prevention and reduction; so the fact the voices of children have been reflected in this Jakarta Declaration is a sign that various stakeholders (including children) have been emphasized in disaster risk reduction."



"I thought it was very important to state my opinions and act!"

■ Keep Speaking Out From Tohoku! ■

In addition to participating in the conference, the students experienced *batik* (cloth) making, which is part of Indonesian culture, and a welcome dinner at which representatives from various countries also joined, making the five days fly by. As was expressed in the proposal to the world, we witnessed members of the Children's Community Building Club vigorously express their opinions from the viewpoint of children, sharing their experiences and efforts with each other, and intermingling with colleagues beyond national boundaries.

Save the Children will work together with children so that the children of Tohoku can raise their voices and participate in the reduction of disaster risks in the world, as well as the reconstruction of their community. Please be sure to listen to the voices of children from Tohoku!

(Reported by Tomoko Tsuda, Sendai Office)