

**“We want to have a clean park where we can play in peace”
~ The rehabilitation of parks in Ishinomaki (Final) ~
(December 25, 2012)**

In cooperation with the City Planning Division of Ishinomaki City, Miyagi prefecture, Save the Children Japan (SCJ) worked for the rehabilitation of parks in the city. This was part of a collaborative effort supported by the “Unilever Kids Smile Project” by Unilever Japan Holdings, K.K. The objective was to ensure the access to a protective and safe environment in which children can play, learn, and develop after the earthquake and tsunami.

In November and December 2012, our third and fourth park rehabilitation activities, Hebita-Danchi-Kita Park and Ohashi-Minami Park were finally reopened. The following is a description of how the parks were rehabilitated and completed together with the community and children.

● Hebita and Ohashi-Minami: The results of children’s design contest ●

In order to rehabilitate the parks, SCJ first started by listening to children’s opinions. For both parks, Design 3 was selected by their votes. The children commented: “I want to have a rock-climbing facility in this park” and “The park should have play equipment for younger children so that they can also play” (Hebita), and “The whole design is good” (Ohashi-Minami). It appeared that cute play equipment for infants was a key factor in improving the park’s play environment.

● Starting park rehabilitation ●

Based on the results of the contest, park rehabilitation started in September. It proceeded smoothly and new play equipment was installed in November.



Additionally, at Hebita, the neighborhood association, Unilever Japan and SCJ collaborated

to paint the existing play equipment. This activity complemented the new equipment to make the park even more attractive and appealing to the children.

This activity contributed to building a trustful relationship with the neighborhood association; and the painting was completed in one day by the three parties.

● **Opening event / Celebrating with children** ●

Finally, on November 10th (Hebita Park) and December 1st (Ohashi-Minami) a total of 150 children and 64 adults celebrated the opening of the rehabilitated parks. Many children participated and enjoyed the opening ceremonies.



After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the children played a “true or false game” related to rehabilitation of the parks. Many of the children gave correct answers, as it was easy for those children who had been involved in the questionnaires regarding the park rehabilitation and the design contest.

[POKÉMON with YOU Workshop]

Coloring and eco-bag making were popular activities among children. There were even some children who wanted to stand in line again for a second try.



[Disaster preparedness/reduction lessons by Washin Club: Let's think about disaster preparedness items through playing BINGO♪]

While enjoying BINGO, children gave their ideas about what disaster preparedness equipment they could put in a new storage bench now in their new park.



[Playing with new play equipment ~ on play equipment interviews]



When we asked children what they would recommend about their new play equipment to their friends, the children answered, “The good thing is that everyone can play with it together.” They also suggested new play equipment while pointing out many things we should also pay attention to for their safety.



Local residents from the neighborhood association played an important role in interviewing the children. They actively encouraged children to give their impressions on the play equipment and seemed to enjoy the communication with children in the community.



“With a roof, this looks like a secret place!”



Composite play equipment for infants is so popular!

At the event, we conducted interviews with children so that we could share their comments with children and neighbors who were unable to come to the parks.

During the park rehabilitation activity, we carefully advanced the process from the questionnaires on parks, to the design contest, and the opening event. We wanted to create opportunities for children to be active agents in the recovery of their hometown. By including children in the process, the community's interest in the park rehabilitation was increased as well. When we visited the parks after the rehabilitation, we noticed children voluntarily collecting litter. The neighborhood association informed us that children used the park more often after the rehabilitation of the park.

By receiving warm support from many people, especially the children, the rehabilitated parks are part of the local communities. We wish to thank all the children who shared their opinions and participated in these activities, and everyone involved in this project. Thank you very much!

The park rehabilitation activity in Ishinomaki City is now completed. We look forward to seeing even more children enjoying these new parks in the warmer seasons.

(Reported by libe, Sendai Office)