Press Release

Save the Children

8 April 2025 – Tokyo
Save the Children Japan

International Commitment to Protect Education from Attack:

Launch of Online Petition Campaign Urging Japan to Endorse the Safe Schools Declaration

Tokyo, 8 April 2025 - "The Safe Schools Declaration Japan Campaign" (Secretariat: Save the Children Japan), a campaign to call upon citizens—especially children, students, teachers and stakeholders in the education sector—to sign the online petition launches today, to urge the Government of Japan to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, an international commitment to protect schools and universities from attack and military use.



As attacks on education worsens, Japan has yet to endorse the Declaration

Currently, 473 million children worldwide (approximately one in five children) live in conflict zones[1]. As conflicts persist and escalate, **attacks on education** have become more frequent and widespread. Attacks on schools and universities, military use of educational facilities, and abductions and killings of students and teachers[2] have resulted in 234 million children and young people being deprived of education worldwide[3].

One of the reasons why schools are targeted is because s**chools are used for military purposes.** As many school buildings are large and sturdy, and have multiple rooms, schoolyards, as well as sanitation and cooking facilities, education facilities are sometimes used for military purposes, such as military bases, barracks, storage facilities for weapons and other items, and shooting training grounds. As a result, schools and universities, despite being protected civilian facilities, are turned into military objectives subject to attack by armed forces.

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[1] Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). "473 Million Children Live in Conflict Zones." (31 October 2024) https://blogs.prio.org/2024/10/473-million-children-live-in-conflict-zones/

[2] Global Coalition to Protection Education from Attack (GCPEA). "Education Under Attack 2024." (June 2024) https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2024_execsum_eng.pdf

[3] Education Cannot Wait. "Global Estimates 2025 Update." (January 2025) https://www.educationcannotwait.org/global-estimates-2025-update

The Safe Schools Declaration, opened for endorsement in 2015, serves as an international framework to protect education in armed conflict, with 121 supporting countries to date. As this year marks its 10th anniversary, the Government of Japan is the only G7 country that has not yet endorsed the Declaration[4].

Endorsing states are expected to adhere to the following commitments:

1. Prohibit the use of functioning schools and universities in support of the military effort.
2. Prohibit the use of abandoned/evacuated schools for military efforts, except when no viable alternatives are available.
3. Ban the deliberate destruction of schools during armed conflict.
4. Consider all feasible alternative measures, including issuing a prior warning, before attacking a school used for military purposes.
5. Prohibit the provision of security for schools by fighting forces, except when no viable alternatives are available.
6. Incorporate and implement the "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict" into domestic policies and operational frameworks

※For details on the Declaration, please refer to the Campaign webpage.

Overview of the Safe Schools Declaration Japan Campaign

The Campaign raises awareness on SSD and education in emergencies, and engages citizens—especially the young people, students and teachers—through online petition via the Campaign webpages at Change.org and "Compass for Tomorrow" (Save the Children Japan's child-friendly website).

- **Campaign Duration**
  Phase 1: April–June 2025 (until the G7 Kananaskis Summit on June 15-17)
  Phase 2: June–September 2025 (until the IPEA on September 9)
  Phase 3: September–December 2025
  *The Campaign period may be extended up to Phase 3, depending on the progress.
  *Updates and relevant activities will be posted on the Campaign webpage as needed.

- **Expected Participants**
  General public, especially children, students, teachers, school and education personnel, and aid workers
  The information will be disseminated in English as well to attain signatures from abroad.

[4] GCPEA. "The Safe Schools Declaration." https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/

- **Call for & Submission of Petition**
  - **Petition can be signed on either of the following Campaign pages.**
    *Children under 18 are encouraged to sign via "Compass for Tomorrow" with consent of guardian.

    1. **Compass for Tomorrow**
       https://asuno-compass.savechildren.or.jp/action/sdg4/

    2. **Change.org**
       https://www.change.org/SafeSchoolsJapanCampaign_eng

  - **The collected signatures from both Campaign pages will be submitted periodically to relevant ministries and lawmakers of the Government of Japan.**
    [Key Decision Makers] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, members of the National Diet working on international and humanitarian assistance

- **Contents of Posts on Social Media & Websites>**
  - Statement of support for the School Safeguard Declaration (SSD) endorsement
  - Current state of education in conflict-affected areas: Voices of those involved and supporters, latest reports from GCPEA, etc.
  - What has been achieved and changed by SSD: Practical effects even if not legally binding

- **Campaign Organizers and Partners**
  Organizer: Safe School Declaration Japan Campaign
  Co-organizer and Secretariat: Save the Children Japan
  Partners (more to join): Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE)
  Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)



Damaged school outside Kyiv, Ukraine



Safe Schools Declaration Endorsing States
(as of January 2025, provided by GCPEA)

- **Organization Profiles**

Save the Children

An international NGO dedicated to ensuring children's rights to survival, development, protection, and participation. Founded in 1919 in the UK, it currently operates in 115 countries. Save the Children Japan was established in 1986 and continues its efforts both domestically and internationally.
https://www.savechildren.or.jp/

Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE)

A network of NGOs engaged in international education cooperation, aiming to guarantee the right to education for all and contribute to the achievement of SDG4 (ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities). As of April 2025, JNNE consists of 23 member organisations. https://jnne.org/

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

GCPEA is a coalition of organizations that includes: Save the Children, Amnesty International, the Education Above All Foundation (EAA), Human Rights Watch, Plan International, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). GPCEA is a project of the Tides Center, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.
https://protectingeducation.org/

- **Campaign Media Accounts (Save the Children Japan)**

Facebook： https://www.facebook.com/SCJ.SavetheChildrenJapan/
X/Twitter： https://x.com/scjapan
Instagram： https://www.instagram.com/savethechildren_japan/
Instagram： https://www.instagram.com/will_for_children/ *SCJ Youth Team Account

For media enquiries

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