



Regional Children's Consultation
for the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference
on Disaster Risk Reduction
Children's Voices from Tohoku
"If I were a Prime Minister"

Introduction

Save the Children, an international non-governmental organization (INGO), works in 120 countries to realize children's rights to survive, develop, be protected and participate. Soon after the March 11th earthquake and tsunami in 2011, Save the Children Japan launched its emergency response and recovery programme in Iwate, Fukushima and Miyagi Prefectures.

Save the Children Japan has been conducting the "Speaking Out From Tohoku" (SOFT) programme since May 2011 as part of Save the Children's recovery programme. The SOFT programme aims to build better communities by creating opportunities for children to speak out their thoughts and opinions, and to participate in reconstruction processes.

Since July 2012, children in the SOFT programme have taken action towards improving disaster risk reduction by sharing their thoughts and opinions at international platforms based on their own experiences.

In 2015, the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be organized by UNISDR in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. At this conference, an international action plan to protect lives from disasters will be formulated as a successor framework building on the Hyogo Framework for Action. Towards this end, regional and national consultations are taking place all over the world. The 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in June 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand, where there will be further discussions about DRR issues in Asia.

To meaningfully incorporate the voices of Japanese children in the AMCDRR, Save the Children Japan held a Regional Children's Consultation in Sendai city, Miyagi Prefecture on March 30 and 31, 2014. During this two-day consultation, children assumed the role of a Prime Minister and delivered their ideas on what governments should do to lessen the impact of disasters on children. This report summarizes the voices of children during this consultation.

Please read on to hear the voices of the children.

http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/creating-child-friendly-communities
http://www.youtube.com/user/SpeakingOutCh

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Regional Children's Consultations were held in countries across Asia for the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. Save the Children Japan held a Regional Children's Consultation for the inclusion of children's rights and needs into the Post-2015 Framework for DRR (HFA2), taking into account the capacity of children and youth. Date: March 30 and 31, 2014
Place: Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture
Participants: Thirty-seven children between 10 to 18 years old from Fukushima, Iwate, and Miyagi prefectures
Children of different ages and hometowns took part in a two-day workshop with various activities. Based on their own experiences, they thought about and discussed the following five key questions:
1. What disasters (resulting from natural hazards) have you experienced?
2. How have the disasters affected you? How has it affected other children and youth in your school and community?
3. What initiatives and activities have been done/or are being done to reduce the effects of disasters on children and youth like yourselves? In what ways have you contributed in those initiatives and activities?
4. What do you think should be asked of governments to lessen the impact of disasters on children and youth like yourselves?
5. In what ways do you think children and youth can contribute towards reducing the impact of disasters?

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"If I were a Prime Minister"

Places that Provide a Sense of Belonging

- I will create parks on high ground so that it is easier for children to evacuate when a tsunami strikes. (Female, 11 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)
- I would make every effort to create children's havens by incorporating the opinions from all children. We need a place to frequent where we can rest and relax. I believe we need such fun places to play. (Female, 11 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)
- I would like to build a natural park so that we can have a nice place to relax. It would also be very ecological if we utilized the trees cut down to create park spaces to make playground equipment. (Female, 12 years old, Iwate Prefecture)
- In order to create more children's places that give us a sense of belonging, I would build a lot of facilities where we can play freely and communicate with others in a casual way. The tsunami and fires of 3.11 took such facilities away from us. Living in temporary housing is stressful, as we don't get enough exercise. This has resulted in more children that lack social skills in communication and cooperation. (Female, 17 years old, Iwate Prefecture)
- I would involve the whole nation in supporting children's recreational camps. Children in Fukushima need to take a break and go to places with lower radiation levels; however, we have less and less recreational camps due to lack of finances. Nowadays, a lot of children in Fukushima cannot even go to recreational camps. (Female, 16 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)

Mental Health Care

- I would build safe and fun places where we can forget about sad things. We like to play because it is fun and relieves our anxiety. If we can create a place to play, it should be fun. (Female, 10 years old, Iwate Prefecture)
- I would create a place where community members can socialize freely. It should be built in a safe location so that we can utilize it as a shelter in case of emergency. To have a place where we can casually come in contact with each other will help people evacuate together in times of emergency and eventually minimize casualties, and also it can serve as a psychological haven for the community after a disaster. By utilizing it as a shelter, it also makes it easier to know who has found safety after a disaster. (Female, 14 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)
- I would create opportunities for children to express their opinions. Even after the same earthquake, each person's heart is wounded differently, so we need to share our experiences to ease our minds and to discuss better ideas for DRR. (Female, 14 years old, Iwate Prefecture)



* The children's voices appearing in this leaflet are those of children who participated in the regional workshop. Therefore, each voice does not represent the views of all participating children nor those of Save the Children Japan.

Children's Opinions

- To promote disaster risk reduction that responds to the needs of children, I will disseminate a questionnaire to children asking them what they would do if they were caught in a disaster. At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake and following tsunami, we children found ourselves in difficult situations where we lacked necessities such as baby formula, toys, and school supplies. As a consequence, in some respects we were forced to bear additional hardships to adults. I have been questioning the fact that adults keep making decisions on our behalf. (Female, 14 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)
- I would create opportunities where adults and children have equal rights to exchange opinions. Currently it is unbalanced as adult's opinions always hold more weight. But think about it for a moment; if children's opinions mattered more than those of adults, we would see the situation as unbalanced. (Female, 14 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)
- Adults need to give up on their concept that "children are only children after all," and should be willing to listen to our voices. The government needs to act on this. (Female, 16 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)
- I would eagerly go to places so as to collect opinions from as many children as I could and deliver their messages to the nation and the world! I believe it is children who understand children the most. (Female, 16 years old, Iwate Prefecture)



Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Education

- I will establish a global children's organization on disaster risk reduction. I believe that we can encourage and protect other children by taking action on our own. There are many things that only children can share and do together. It is easier for us to empathize with each other. (Female, 16 years old, Iwate Prefecture)
- I would make disaster prevention education mandatory so that people take it seriously. It should provide not only emergency drills, but also actual class work such as experiencing models of how tsunamis work or listening to stories of those who survived 3.11. It would aim to increase people's awareness and to foster better preparedness for future emergencies. (Female, 16 years old, Iwate Prefecture)
- I would incorporate radiation emergency and disaster prevention education as a compulsory part of our curriculum. I think Japan needs to take the initiative in disaster prevention and radiation emergency education as we have frequent earthquakes and have just gone through such an unprecedented disaster. If we provide children with adequate information on disaster prevention and about nuclear plants, they will naturally learn the risks and know what to do in cases of emergency. (Female, 17 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)
- I would create an opportunity to learn about our own community as there always is a possibility that disasters such as nuclear accidents, tsunamis, or fires can happen. The earlier, the better, so it should be provided at an early stage such as elementary school. (Female, 17 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)
- I would help NPOs that provide disaster relief volunteer work act more vigorously. Also, I would promote their work by creating classes where people can learn and experience actual NPO activities in schools so that more people would want to give their support. (Female, 17 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)
- I would like to summarize all of our experiences of natural disasters that have happened globally in one document and pass that onto the next generation all over the world. I want to do this to create opportunities for the free exchange of opinions without distinction of age or social status. (Female, 17 years old, Iwate Prefecture)

Children's Health

- I promise to always put children's health first. I will adopt the most strict radiation safety levels (the lowest dose of radiation exposure) in the world. If we want the affected areas of 3.11 to endure further prosperity, we must have the strictest safety levels, so that we can protect our offspring who will soon be taking major roles in the restoration of these areas. (Female, 17 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)
- I will fix safety measures so as to ensure that children's health is a top priority. Some measures I would use include providing thyroid testing, using pictures to explain early detection, and providing recuperation retreat programs for children to play in safe places. (Male, 14 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)
- I would abandon nuclear power generation. Children are afraid of unpredictable illnesses in the future, the health of their own future children, and the many other unforeseen impacts of radiation. Therefore, I want to restore to children the health and smiles that once existed here. (Female, 16 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)



Access to Information and Information Sharing

- I propose a new international law that makes the immediate disclosure of information at times of disaster obligatory. It took a whole week for the government to make public the news that contaminated water had leaked from a tank at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, which only increased our anxiety. When such important information is concealed it makes everybody worried, especially children, as we don't have as much access to knowledge as adults. I think it is necessary for each government to accurately present information to the public both before and during disasters so that each citizen can judge the situation clearly and act calmly. (Male, 15 years old, Fukushima Prefecture)
- I would like to create a system such that we can join forces not only nationally, but also globally, to exchange information as much as we can in order to prevent similar disasters from happening again. (Male, 16 years old, Iwate Prefecture)

Others

- As a Prime Minister, I would act positively on my own initiative to visit the field and work with children in order to meet their needs. Then I would make a law for members of congress and government workers to take turns to visit the field and work with children. (Male, 17 years old, Iwate Prefecture)
- I would recommend political policies that increase citizens' ability to speak out without worrying about losing their positions. In cases of emergency, we cannot afford to wait until someone high up gives us orders. We need people who can make decisions on their own without unnecessary restraints. (Female, 16 years old, Miyagi Prefecture)