

Chapter 5: Handling Children and Child-Rearing in Areas Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake

Section 1: The Situation of Children in the Great East Japan Earthquake

1. The Situation of Children in the Great East Japan Earthquake

The Great East Japan Earthquake, which occurred March 11, 2011, has brought extensive damage. In the three prefectures, namely Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, the number of deceased persons is 15,786 as of March 11, 2012: The ages of all the casualties have become clear through autopsies, and out of that number, people aged between 0 to 9 are 466 and those aged between 10 and 19 are 419.

Regarding the children who lost their parent(s), it has been confirmed that the number of the earthquake-related orphans amounts to 241, (94 in Iwate pref., 126 in Miyagi pref., and 21 in Fukushima pref.). Moreover, the number of earthquake-related bereaved children has been also confirmed to be 1,372 (481 in Iwate pref., 749 in Miyagi pref., and 142 in Fukushima pref.), as of March 28, 2012.

Furthermore, the number of school children being taken in from schools in those three prefectures seriously affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake (Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures) is 25,751. And its breakdown is 4,466 from kindergartens, 14,071 from elementary schools, 4,760 from junior high schools, 2,307 from senior high schools, 10 from secondary schools, and 137 from special needs schools (elementary level, junior high school level and senior high school level (none have been taken in at the kindergarten level)) (As of September 1, 2011. Total number of national, public, and private schools: This number includes the number of schools within the same prefecture.)

In addition, 941 kindergartens, 1,590 nurseries(including unauthorized ones), 3,269 elementary schools, 1,700 junior high schools, 7 secondary schools, and 186 special needs schools experienced property damage (Kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools, secondary schools. In addition, the number of special needs schools is as of March 31, 2012, and the number of day-care centers is as of October 1, 2011).

Section 2: Handling Children and Child-Rearing in Areas Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake

1. Regarding Welfare (Including mental healthcare)

1) Understanding the Current Situation and Providing Care for Children Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake

In order to understand the current situation of children affected by the Earthquake and provide care for them, we have been supporting those children as follows:

- Regarding the children who have lost their parents and or whose parents are missing, teams composed of people from child guidance centers from within as well as from outside of the affected prefectures, have been created to visit each of the evacuation centers. This is in order to understand the current situation, to consult with children, who have lost their parents, to interview children, and to discuss their nurturing and living situation with their relatives.
- Expenses incurred in the consultations with and in the aid for children affected by the Earthquake were recorded in the first and fourth supplementary budgets in FY 2011. (We implemented this also in FY 2012)

- In order to strive for the enrichment of mental healthcare for school children affected by the Earthquake, we recorded expenses necessary for dispatching school counselors and the like to schools in the first supplementary budget and in the third supplementary budget for fiscal year 2011. (About 3.4 billion yen and all this amount is from national treasury.)
- Regarding the restoration of day-care centers and the like, looking from the perspective of regional support for children and child-rearing, expenses for promoting infrastructures such as the conversion to certified children care centers (*), and support bases for regional child-rearing, while striving for their unification and multi-functionality were recorded in the third supplementary budget of FY 2011. (* Nintei Kodomo En: Facilities that offer general services to children prior to entering day-care centers and kindergartens for the purpose of supporting nurturing parents. Certified based upon the rules and regulations of each prefecture.)

2. Regarding Schools and Education

1) Support for Children's Learning

In order to help children learn, we take the following into consideration:

(1) Acceptance of children affected by the Earthquake into schools

When students ask schools within the region to accept them, we treat such cases as flexibly as possible and request immediate acceptance by each education board.

(2) Provision on Textbooks

Regarding the provision on textbooks for the students who were obliged to change their schools due to the Earthquake and who are under compulsory education, we flexibly manage their cases by providing them with textbooks even without certificates of textbook grant.

(3) Aid for School Attendance

a) Aid for school attendance of school children

Measures were taken for the “Temporary Special Subsidies to Support the School Attendance of School Children” in the first and third supplementary budgets in FY 2011 (Approximately 14.7 billion yen). This helped school children affected by the Earthquake to attend schools and at the same time on and after 2012 and over the following three years, necessary expenses (approximately 26.4 billion yen) will be provided in order to implement the required aid for their school attendance.

b) Teaching and Learning Support for Students

We request each university, college, etc. to make consideration for students affected by the Earthquake in terms of approval of credits, academic degrees and graduation.

c) Economic Support for Students

Funds have been appropriate in the first and third supplementary budgets of FY 2011 for Scholarship Loan(interest free), and the enhancement of tuition waivers for students affected by the Earthquake.

d) Employment Assistance for Students

In the joint names of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and the Technology and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, both ministries request each major business group not to cancel employment.

(4) Increase of Teaching Staff

Regarding the increase of teaching staff due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, based upon the requests from each prefecture, in FY 2011, 1,080 teachers in total (986 for compulsory education schools, 94 for high schools) and in FY 2012, 1,031 teachers in total (970 for compulsory education schools and 61 for high schools) have been provided.

(5) Restoration of School Facilities and Social Education Facilities

Necessary budget has been appropriated from the first to the third supplementary budgets in FY 2011 to cover the expenses for the restoration and reconstruction of facilities such as schools and social education facilities.

(6) Implementation of radiation monitoring in schools and Efforts to Reduce Dose of Radiation Received by Children and Students

- The measurement of air dose rates is to be carried out in playgrounds and schoolyards of elementary schools, junior high schools, kindergartens, nurseries and special schools (except for the evacuation area within 20km) Fukushima.

- The results will be publicized. On August 26, 2011, we submitted notice to Fukushima and other prefectures that at schools and day-care centers we set the guide line for the radioactivity dose student may receive at less than 1m Sv per year, and in order to accomplish this, we set the benchmark for the radioactivity air dose rate of schoolyards to less than 1 μ Sv per hour, and we must understand the places where radioactivity air doses are high, and proceed with decontamination work

(7) Programs to help disaster-stricken area

To promote the matching of needs and support of the affected areas, the "portal site support the Great East Japan Earthquake, children learning portal site" was opened and operated on the website of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Science.

(URL: <http://manabishien.mext.go.jp/>)

3. Regarding Expecting Mothers and Infants

1) Acceptance System for Expecting Mothers

Regarding the acceptance system for expecting mothers in the affected areas, we have established inquiry counters and we have asked that each one of prefectures take proper actions when there are requests from affected local governments and medical organizations.

2) Medical Checks for Expecting Mothers and Infants and Victims of the Earthquake

We have asked each one of prefectures to provide proper services for expecting mothers and infants, regardless of whether there are changes to certificates of residence or not, with regard to the issuance of maternity passbook and medical checks.

3) Support for Municipal Public Health Services for Mothers and Children

We have asked local governments to support municipal public health services for babies and young children that are living in temporary houses, etc.

4) Measures for Dismissal due to Maternity Leave and Childcare Leave

Regarding the consultations on dismissals for the reasons of attaining maternity leave (before and after giving birth), childcare leave and/or gender, we have paid close attention to these issues at the equal employment divisions in the damaged areas and we have provided instructions in order to prevent these problems.

5) Lump-Sum Birth Allowance

Regarding hospitals, clinics, and birth centers, we informed them to utilize direct payment systems for expecting mothers who request so, even when they are unable to show insurance cards due to the Great East Japan Earthquake.

2. Other

1) Addressing the certification of child allowance

We have asked local governments to simplify the process of applying and give special consideration for delayed applications when the people affected by the Earthquake will apply for child allowance.

2) Addressing the handling of child-rearing allowance

Regarding the treatment of the child rearing allowance for victims of the Earthquake, the following was informed to each one of prefectures <1> Special treatment, when deemed necessary in light of major disaster, for income constraints and omission of attached documents, as well as early payments when it is not confirmed whether the father or mother is alive or dead, <2> extension of redemption period of welfare loans for fatherless families and widows, <3> regarding short-stay businesses, flexible support for households affected by the disaster

3) Addressing Special childcare allowance for victims of the Earthquake

Regarding the treatment of the special childcare allowance for victims of the Earthquake, we have spread information involving <1> The timing for payment of the special childcare allowance, <2> omission of attached documents when deemed necessary in light of major disaster, <3> mitigation of income constraints for people who approximately more than half of their houses and assets have been damaged, <4> administrative processes associated with the Earthquake.

4) Designing evacuation sites and establishing a safe living environment that are friendly to women and childrearing

In addition to promoting the designing evacuation sites and the establishment of a safe living environment that are friendly to women and childrearing, the government is promoting the reflection of women's participation and wishes in the management of

evacuation sites.

5) Securing housing

We ask local governments to give high priority to babies and young children who have been evacuated due to the Earthquake in terms of securing housing.