Childrearing Support at the Area Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake

1 Situation regarding children in the Great East Japan Earthquake

The Great East Japan Earthquake occurred in March 11, 2011 causing an unprecedented damage. The number of dead people who were recovered and subjected to an autopsy in the most damage-stricken 3 prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima was 15,825 people as of February 28, 2018, and the number of identified people was 15,763 people, while children in the ages of 0 to 9 years were 469 and those in the ages of 10 to 19 were 425. 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.) and the number of earthquake-related bereaved children amounts to 1,514 (488 in Iwate pref., 871 in Miyagi pref., and 155 in Fukushima pref.) (as of March 1, 2014).

Moreover, 15,314 students that had to attend different schools from the ones which they had attended before the disaster. The details are as follows: elementary school, 8,832; junior high school 4,925; high school 1,363; compulsory education school, 19; secondary school, 24; special needs education school (elementary/junior high/high school section), 151 (as of May 1, 2017: the total of national/public/private schools: including the students from the same prefecture). As for 3 prefectures having quite serious damage (Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures), 8,197 students moved to schools located in other prefectures. The details are as follows: Iwate prefecture, 200; Miyagi prefecture, 1,049; Fukushima prefecture, 6,948 (as of May 1, 2017: the total of national/public/private schools).

In addition, 941 kindergartens, 3,269 elementary schools, 1,700 junior high schools, 7 secondary schools and 186 special needs education schools sustained physical damage (as of September 14, 2012).

2 Efforts to deal with children and childrearing in areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake

(1) Promotion of support to children based on the Comprehensive Disaster Victims Support Measures (Health and Livelihood Support)

According to “General measures for supporting victims (support for health and life)” that was established on January 23, 2015, support for children being damaged due to the disaster is one of the main measures. Comprehensive support for children being damaged has been implemented based on “General grant for supporting victims’ health and lives (2015)” and “General grant for supporting victims (2016).” Various support for children such as mental health care and learning support has been conducted continuously.

(2) Efforts to create “New Tohoku”

Before the earthquake, the Tohoku region had a variety of problems including population decline, aging, hollowing out of industry, etc. For this reason, efforts are underway to create “New Tohoku” which may serve as a model for Japan and other countries in the world by not only recovering simply to the previous state, but also by overcoming these problems in the wake of the reconstruction from the earthquake disaster. Specifically, the “New Tohoku” leading model project designed to Support the acceleration of pioneering efforts by a wide variety of people from companies, universities and NPOs among others was implemented (the project was terminated at the end of FY 2015).

In the disaster stricken areas, problems have arisen, such as that children play less outdoors, people suffer from stress due to the change in livelihood circumstances, etc. In order to solve these problems, it is important to push forward the creation of a secure society in which energetic and healthy children can grow through the creation of places where children can stay and play (playgrounds and sporting grounds) and through the development of human resources capable of helping children grow from both the physical and mental perspectives.

In a project of the “New Tohoku” leading model project of FY 2015, in order to expand the activity to create children’s playgrounds to a variety of areas as a sustainable effort, efforts that contribute to the rehabilitation of local communities are being made, such as the creation of playgrounds by making use of a shared space in public restoration housing and of playgrounds by making use of agricultural environment.

3 Cases of support for childrearing in areas affected by the disaster

In areas affected by the disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake, local governments, Specified Nonprofit Corporations and volunteer organizations are providing continued support to children and parents with children.

<Continuous providing playing spaces in the devastated places (Iwate prefecture)>:
[Measures taken at Child Support Center Iwate Office of The Great East Japan Earthquake]
“Child Support Center Iwate Office of The Great East Japan Earthquake” and the other centers take continuous
measures for providing children damaged by tsunami of Great East Japan Earthquake with playing spaces in Iwate prefecture. This center was established in March 2012 to support damaged children stably and continuously. Iwate prefecture has outsourced this business to prefectural social welfare business institution since its establishment. Various services are implemented such as survey of the current status of municipalities along the coast, survey of playing of children living in the damaged area, construction of information delivery system for supporting children in the damaged areas, and training seminars for supporters working at nursery schools/kindergartens/support centers for childrearing and parents in order to meet the demands.

[Project for playing (project for children’s healthy development)]
They were short of playing spaces for children in the areas along the coast in Iwate prefecture, because large-sized motor vehicles passed the road and temporary houses were built in parks/school grounds. Supporting children’s playing became one of the themes at the center. “Project for playing” (business for children’s healthy development) was established. The following business services were provided based on this project in 2017.

- **Wanpaku Kids Project/Aozora Kids Project**
  Aids to rent a bus for excursion with parents was implemented for nursery schools / kindergartens / authorized children’s center / after-school children’s club that were located along the coast and had difficulty in performing several events. Large-sized playing equipment was installed at nursery schools without plans for excursion to provide children with playing places (Wanpaku Kids Project). This business was implemented 104 times in total in FY 2017. 9,892 people joined the program (excursion, 98 times and 9,538 persons; playing equipment dispatch, 6 times and 354 persons).
  Support such as installment of parks where children can play safely and movement into indoor facilities are implemented, because there are no grounds or playing equipment at nursery schools along the coast and children cannot play outside because of increase in vehicles for construction (Aozora kids Business service). This support was implemented 28 times in total and 1,236 persons participated in the program in FY 2017.

[Wanpaku kids project](image)
(Bus excursion to Mooland Motoyoshi)

[Wanpaku kids project](image)
(Here comes the big slide to the hall in our kindergarten!)
Section 1  Support for each different stage of marriage, pregnancy and childbirth and childcare

○Wanpaku Square Project
Large-sized playing equipment is installed at gyms etc. in the areas along the coast on Saturdays and Sundays to provide pre-school children with places/chances to play without worry. It was held 24 times at 8 cities/towns along the coast in FY 2017. 6,638 persons (including 3,385 pre-school children) joined the service. It was held 100 times in fall of the year, and “100th anniversary event” was held. According to the questionnaire for children/parents that joined Wanpaku square project, the attendants said, “I want this project to continue because there are no places to make children play without worry,” or “I am looking forward to this project every time.”

<Support for supporters of childrearing at temporary houses (Miyagi prefecture)>
[Measures of “Support business service for support centers of temporary houses by NPO, Child-line Miyagi”]
Miyagi prefecture has taken measures for supporter that has supported children and families rearing children in the damaged areas for a long time since 2016. 7 years have passed since Great East Japan Earthquake. Movement from temporary houses to public houses for victims has been promoted in Miyagi prefecture. Living in temporary houses has been extended, and the problems about which supporters for children living there and families rearing children have been concerned are revealed. The prefecture outsourced “Support business service for support centers of temporary houses” to NPO, Child-line Miyagi. Training for acquiring skills for persons related to childrearing support at temporary houses, seminars for solving problems, and conference for constructing network among related persons were held.

[Seminar for improving ability of supporters of lives of victims]
A seminar for improving ability of supporters of lives of victims was held 6 times in Sendai zone, Ishinomaki zone, and Kesennuma zone, respectively (18 times in total) in FY 2017. 220 supporters at temporary houses / teachers / nursery school teachers / welfare commissioners / commissioned child welfare volunteers / NPOs supporting victims attended the seminar. 6 themes were set at the seminar as follows, which staffs of Child-line Miyagi considered to be current challenges: 1) current status of poverty in the devastated areas and its measures; 2) child abuse/domestic violence; 3) bullying and non-attendance at school; 4) technique for responding to the problems (listening attentively/claim); 5) self-care; 6) procedures for managing organizations. The attendants said, “Some victims have fulfilled reconstruction for themselves, and have started moving to public houses for victims. However, it is quite difficult for the victims that cannot leave temporary houses. This seminar is quite useful.” “I have been worrying about a child, but I don’t know where to contact. I am happy to get information.” “I have recognized that complaint is a sign. I have learned how to listen attentively, and I think I can deal with the problems having enough time.”
Coordination conference to solve problems on support for childrearing

Coordination conference was held 3 times in Sendai zone, Ishinomaki zone, and Kesennuma zone, respectively in FY 2017. Municipal staffs in the zones/staffs of council of social welfare/person in charge of general business service organizations for supporting victims/related persons to local community organizations/supporters for victims attended the conference. Current activities on childrearing support at temporary houses and excellent examples were reported and various ideas were exchanged at the conference to construct network depending on the current status of the area.

In Miyagi prefecture, this business service has been implemented continuously in FY 2018. Measures are expanded for not only victims at temporary houses but also for damaged children living in this prefecture and supporters for families rearing children.

Measures for improving children’s physical strength and exercise capacity (Fukushima prefecture)

[“Program for rearing children’s playing ability in Fukushima”]

Children in Fukushima prefecture have been restricted to do outdoor activities and outdoor playing due to suspicion of radioactive substance since Great East Japan Earthquake. Therefore, decrease in exercise capacity of children and accumulation of stress are concerned. “Program for rearing children’s playing ability in Fukushima” was prepared in collaboration with prefectural institution and Public interest incorporated associations for the environment of children. The purpose of this program was to activate playing of children. 2 business services, “Seminar for trainers” and “Physical exercise for children and parents,” have been implemented to promote this program since FY 2016 (Fukushima Genki-up Project).

At “Self-care” seminar

At coordination conference
Seminars for trainers, “Seminar for rearing children in Fukushima,” was held at 5 areas in the prefecture according to “Fukushima Genki-up Project,” which was implemented in 2017. In addition, an event for children and parents was held at 2 areas in this prefecture. A lecturer from Public interest incorporated associations for the environment of children told importance of physical exercise for infants and how to create an environment for inspiring children’s playing at “Seminar for rearing Fukushimakko.” “Tanizousan” (Kunihiro Taniguchi), who is famous for creating music of a popular TV program and choreography, instructed dancing to the music he originally created for children in Fukushima. 240 kindergarten teachers/nursery school teachers/the other related persons took the lecture. Instruction of dancing originally created and another dancing to the music originally created was implemented at an event for children and parents. Tanizousan and “Kibitan,” which is a mascot character of Fukushima prefecture, got on the stage. About 590 children and the parents joined the event.

Participants in “Seminar for rearing Fukushimakko”
- I had a very good time. I have been tired with work and childrearing recently, but this seminar gave me energy. I will make effort again. Thank you. (Kitakata City, 43 years old, female)
- I have attended this seminar several times. I enjoy myself every time. The lecture and exercise are very useful. I will make use of them at my nursery school. (Date City, 32 years old, female)

Participants in a family event
- We attended this event for the first time. I am happy to see my child enjoy and smile from the beginning to the end of the event. I will join it the next time, too. Thank you. (Iwaki City, 35 years old, female)
- We attend this event every time. Whenever we go home with full of smiles. Thank you. (Fuukushima City, 36 years old, female)

According to Fukushima City, “Seminar for rearing Fukushimakko” is to be implemented after FY 2018 too at the areas where this seminar has not been done yet.