

Sendai DRR Newsletter

Towards a Disaster-Resilient and Environmentally-Friendly City

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Disaster Risk Reduction in Daily Life



▲ Disaster Action Map created by Katahira Area Local Community Planning Group

Educating Children – How to Make a Community “Disaster-resilient”

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The Katahira Area is a residential area located in downtown Sendai. There are many single households or non-Japanese residents living in this area. When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, more than 1,800 people, including local residents, international students, and stranded commuters fled to the nearby elementary school etc., which was a designated refuge area. Based on these experiences, the “Katahira Area Local Community Planning Group” has been working on improving disaster prevention capacity in the community since the disaster. As a result of their efforts, the group created “Disaster Action Maps” and started to distribute them in 2015, with the English version being released and distributed in 2017. In addition, children who were 1st graders of elementary school at the time of the disaster formed the “Katahira Children’s Community Planning Squad” five years after the disaster to conduct various activities to help make the Katahira area a better community.

In recognition of their efforts towards disaster risk reduction, the

Katahira Area was designated as a model area for the Local Disaster Risk Reduction Plan by the Japanese Government in 2016. An event called “Disaster Risk Reduction / Treasure Hunting Game” was carried out in March 2017 as a model project. A total of 63 people, including elementary and junior high school students and non-Japanese residents, participated in the event. This game aims to raise the consciousness and awareness of each participant as a protector of the community by strolling around Katahira area to check the location of evacuation centers while learning about local history and culture.

In order to improve disaster prevention capacity in the community, we think it is important that all members of the community co-operate with each other and also increase the number of diverse leaders involved in disaster risk reduction. Young members in our group play an active role in holding disaster drills or planning events that people can enjoy together, regardless of age or nationality.

We would like to continue passing on the charm of our community in which we grew up and the importance of disaster preparedness to the next generation. By doing so, we hope to widely promote making communities “disaster-resilient”.



▲ Handing out of treasure hunting completion certificates at the closing ceremony

* **SBL** An SBL is Sendai Bosai (meaning disaster preparedness) Leader who promotes public awareness of DRR and plans and implements community disaster drills in normal times, and confirms the safety of community residents, helps them evacuate, and does other things needed in times of disaster.

Ruins of the Great East Japan Earthquake: Sendai Arahama Elementary School opens to the public.



▲ School building



▲ 1st Floor

▲ 4th Floor

Sendai City has preserved Arahama Elementary School as ruins of the Great East Japan Earthquake in order to help achieve our goal of never again falling victim to a tsunami, to pass on the lessons we learned, and to show the real threat of tsunamis to future generations.

Arahama Elementary School is located about 700m inland from the coastline. On March 11, 2011, the tsunami surged up to the 2nd floor, with 320 students, school staff, and local residents that evacuated to the school. By looking at the school building, which has been severely damaged from the tsunami, and watching the video footage containing interviews of the principal at the time of disaster, visitors are able to fully understand the threat of tsunamis. Arahama Elementary School being open to the public allows us to provide a platform for visitors to raise their awareness of disaster risk reduction.

http://www.city.sendai.jp/kankyo/shisetsu/documents/arahamasyo_new.pdf

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“Team Bousaisi”

Power of youth who enjoy learning and passing on Disaster Risk Reduction



Playing a disaster prevention game with elementary school children



Members of “Team Bousaisi” in Tohoku Fukushi University

From Left to Right Joint representatives: Niki Yoshinari, Reina Furukawa, Mayu Okada

“Team Bousaisi”^{*1} in Tohoku Fukushi University is a group that consists of students who have acquired a “Bousaisi” qualification. While considering what the “power of youth” can contribute to the improvement of disaster prevention capability, this group, carries out diverse disaster risk reduction activities including holding skill up training such as the “Disaster Imagination Game” in cooperation with the Neighborhood Association^{*2}, schools, businesses and disaster related organizations. They also provide assistance to local disaster drills, and spreading important information through Facebook or radio.

We experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake when we were junior high school students. At the time of the disaster, there was nothing we could do except wait to see how things would turn out. However, after entering university, we became interested in Team Bousaisi’s activities which help to improve local disaster prevention capabilities. Then, we wanted to participate in such activities, and decided to join this group.

At the joint disaster prevention drill, held in Sendai City in June this year, we helped out at the evacuation drill and “Disaster Prevention

Lesson” which was targeted at 1st and 2nd graders of elementary school to learn in fun way through quizzes or games. We also acted as support at a “First Aid Treatment Drill” aimed at junior high school students and members of the Neighborhood Association.

Through our group’s activities, we realized that it is necessary to devise how to communicate the importance of disaster risk reduction in an easy to understand manner to children. We also learned that regardless of age from children to the elderly, they all as members of the community need to help each other in times of disaster.

We would like to continue spreading information to individuals of every age group and carrying out disaster risk reduction activities by using our knowledge and experiences as “Bousaisi,” and our flexible perspective as youth. We also wish to contribute to the improvement of local disaster prevention capabilities after graduating from university.



▲ Giving a lecture about first-aid treatment drills

^{*1} Bousaisi
(Disaster Prevention Expert)

Bousaisi is a private qualification which is certified by the Japan Bousaisi Organization (NPO). It is expected for Bousaisi to engage in rescue activities and evacuation guidance when a disaster occurs.

^{*2} Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood Association is a Community organization which governed by community members. There are approximately 1,400 neighborhood associations in Sendai City. Their activities include holding disaster prevention drills, patrolling neighborhood, and cleaning parks.

“Sendai City’s Five-year Record of Recovery from the Disaster” and “Road to Recovery SENDAI” have been issued.

We have issued “Sendai City’s Five-year Record of Recovery from the Disaster.” It compiles information about Sendai City’s five-year recovery efforts from the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, and also various measures regarding disaster risk reduction. The purpose of issuing this record is to address the difficulties we faced after the disaster, show how we handled them, and highlight the lessons learned from the disaster, and to pass this information on to the next generation. We also hope this record can contribute to helping everyone prepare for future disasters. The record has been sent to local governments throughout the nation.

“Road to Recovery SENDAI” uses interview articles to introduce a wide range of recovery measures implemented by various stakeholders who were driving forces in the recovery process.

We are currently working on creating a compact English version of “Road to Recovery SENDAI.”

We will continue to send information about our disaster recovery efforts out to the world.

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▲ Sendai City’s Five-year Record of Recovery from the Disaster



▲ Road to Recovery SENDAI

“Tsunami Preparedness Day” -November 5th

In June 2011, the Japanese Government designated November 5th as “Tsunami Preparedness Day” after experiencing the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011, which caused the extensive damage. This day is aimed at protecting the lives of people in Japan from tsunamis.

Approaching the end of the 5th year after disaster, Japan took the initiative in proposing a resolution to establish November 5th as “World Tsunami Awareness Day.” This resolution was then adopted by the United Nations (UN). It is expected that the resolution will promote raising awareness of tsunami counter-measures worldwide.

On November 5th every year, Sendai holds various tsunami evacuation drills, including training to spread important information, and rescue drills in the eastern coastal areas, which are designated as tsunami disaster risk areas. By implementing these drills, we are helping to raise awareness among citizens regarding the actions they should take when a tsunami hits, in addition to heightening their awareness of disaster prevention.

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