

City of Kamaishi, Japan



Kamaishi City is a small coastal town located in Iwate Prefecture, Tohoku Region, which was badly hit by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The tsunami submerged three-story buildings, including three public schools along the coastline. In Kamaishi City alone, over 1,100 people were reported dead or missing but almost all the elementary and junior high school children survived. ‘Targeting children was effective as they pass on the messages to their parents and entire communities,’ said Ms. Mariko Sato, Chief of UN-Habitat Bangkok.

Interesting tools and methods were employed to train the students, such as dynamic tsunami simulations games, drills, essay writing, developing hazard maps with communities, and disaster risk reduction mainstreaming into other subjects. Over time, school children were no longer viewed as people to be protected in a passive sense; they had become leaders who assisted others such as younger children and elderly persons in their communities. ‘Tsunami defence infrastructure had fostered a false sense of safety and overconfidence. Coastal local governments in Japan are recognizing a greater need for disaster awareness education such as the one in Kamaishi,’ said Ms. Sato.

Links:

- [Reason for nomination \[PDF 164.71 KB\]](#)
- [Candidate's presentation - Summary \[DOCX 39.66 KB\]](#)
- [Candidate's presentation - Powerpoint \[PPT 6.30 MB\]](#)
- [Candidate's presentation - Japan Times article \[PDF 367.32 KB\]](#)

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