



A member from Hyogo Prefecture's disaster-response education team gives a lesson to Turkish schoolchildren.

Japanese-Style Disaster Education in Turkey

Turkey, like Japan, is notoriously susceptible to earthquakes. The magnitude 7.4 Marmara earthquake that struck northwestern Turkey in August 1999, for example, claimed more than 17,000 lives.

The Turkish government has worked to prepare the country for earthquakes by making buildings and other structures quake-resistant. It also recognizes the importance of educating citizens to enable them to cope with disasters and prepare for future events. Materials have been prepared for this purpose, but they alone are not enough. Turkey also needs programs to educate its citizens in disaster readiness.

To meet this need, the Turkish government proposed to offer disaster education at schools. It is essential to know how to act when an earthquake strikes. When people don't know how to respond, the situation only gets worse; with knowledge, the damage can be minimized. Tomoko Shaw, an expert who works in disaster management for the Japanese engineering and consulting firm OYO International Corp., points out that schools in Japan serve

as hubs for local communities and play a key role in disaster education. Japan, which places considerable emphasis on evacuation drills as part of the disaster-response training offered at schools, is among the world's leaders in this regard.

SCHOOLS AS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

Aware of Japan's reputation for effective disaster education, the Turkish government sent a request for assistance in September 2008 to the government of Japan. JICA responded by developing a curriculum and a system for training teachers at elementary schools and creating a plan for disaster education in the schools.

In a technical cooperation project implemented from January 2011 to January 2014, JICA focused its efforts on eight provinces in the Marmara region and two neighboring provinces, an area of Turkey that was struck by the major 1999 earthquake and that continues to face the threat of seismic destruction. The objectives were to conduct disaster education as part of the regular curriculum, to improve the overall disaster-response system, and to achieve more effective risk management.

As part of the project, teachers from Turkey visited Japan in January 2013 to observe Japanese educational practices firsthand. They received hands-on training in Kobe, a city that endured the



Based on *Iza! Kaeru Caravan!* taught by Kobe NPO Plus Arts (left), the Turkish "Bear Caravan" uses an animal popular among Turkish children.

horrific Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 and has been active in promoting a culture of safety and resilience in Japan since then.

The Turkish visitors were highly impressed with a program called *Iza! Kaeru Caravan!* designed to equip younger children and their parents with the skills and knowledge needed to cope with a disaster. The frog-themed program—*kaeru* means frog in Japanese—uses a nationwide toy-trading scheme created by the artist Hiroshi Fuji to engage children. Through games and other activities, children learn about firefighting, rescue techniques, and first aid.

The teachers from Turkey were struck by the children's enthusiasm for the program and by its effectiveness. They decided that a "Bear Caravan" would be more appealing to Turkish children and introduced a similar program in Turkey with that name on an experimental basis. The key point is to ensure that the learning is enjoyable. When they are having fun, children are more likely to retain the lessons learned.

INCORPORATING THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

For learning to be truly enjoyable, the teacher must also enjoy the experience. Tomoko Shaw and her colleagues spent their days off bringing together teachers, university professors and other experts, and members of local school boards to discuss ef-



Children learn about disaster prevention through relevant topics, such as this experiment on preventing flood erosion.

fective and entertaining methods for disaster-response training and to develop sample lessons.

In the summer of 2013 the team completed a set of lesson plans for disaster education. Those involved in compiling the plans now serve as instructors, visiting various areas in Turkey to train teachers in their use.

In the past, most public initiatives in Turkey have been implemented from the top down and have not tended to incorporate local views. Shaw says this project succeeded in developing the type of lessons the students need by ensuring that local educators, who want to do all they can to create a brighter future for their pupils, took part in preparing the plans.

This project was an effort at community building, with schools as the focal point and the goal of making Turkey better prepared for earthquakes. The idea is to enlist children in moves to make Turkey a safer place to live. Painful lessons drawn from Japan's history of earthquakes are now being used to teach Turkey's children how to cope in the event of a disaster.

A wide range of activities are included in disaster-response training, like this demonstration in putting out fires.

