

# Project for Creating a Safe Place for Children

## Arakawa Ward



### Background

Arakawa Ward (hereinafter referred to as the Ward), since the appointment of Mr. Nishikawa as Mayor of Arakawa Ward in 2004, has been planning and implementing various projects, adopting the concept that “Municipal government is a system for making citizens happy”. In particular, the problem of “child poverty and social exclusion” is depriving children, who will build our future, of healthy growth and even their hope for tomorrow and the future. For this reason, the Ward established the “Research Committee on Child Poverty” in May 2009, pushed ahead with its research on poverty eradication along with the Research Institute for Local Government by Arakawa Ward (RILAC) and published the final report on this research in August 2011.

Based on 42 research case studies, the report identifies “risks” and “determinants” in families associated with child poverty and social exclusion. The risks include 1) unstable family income, 2) heavy burden of making a living, 3) disease, 4) family relationships, 5) isolation, and 6) the poverty cycle. The determinants include 1) parental employment, 2) parental ability to raise children, and 3) support for families. The report also explains that factors of child poverty and social extinction are 1) poor academic ability, 2) poor hygiene, 3) poor diet, 4) child abuse, 5) truancy, and 6) behavioral problems.

The Ward has started specific initiatives such as deploying school social workers and setting up a learning support project to address the shortage of schools, on the basis of the “Arakawa System” for the early detection of signals given by families with the risks described in the report and to reduce those risks in

order to overcome the poverty.

“The Project for Creating Children’s Safe Place” broadly addresses each risk item caused by poverty and social extinction, the determinants, and the factors. It is being carried out as a project linked to the Arakawa System, and little by little is starting to bear fruit.

### Purpose of Project

This project provides children who need various types of support, including socially withdrawn children and bullied children as well as children from families living in poverty, single-parent families, or families where child abuse happens, with food aid, learning support and relaxation, in order to create a safe place for them in the community and to assist them multilaterally from their home life to their school life. This project is intended to promote the healthy upbringing of children in their mind and body as well as their learning ability, and to serve as a safety net to protect them from the vicious cycle of poverty and from other problems that surround them.



Studying...

## Outline of Project

### (1) Role of the Ward

Providing support to groups engaged in the project, coordinating the children, groups, and relevant organisations

### (2) Participants

Children who need support, including children from families living in poverty, socially withdrawn children, and children from single-parent families. Aged 18 or under.

### (3) Content of the project executed by groups

Learning support, offering meals (dinner), interaction and relaxation

[Daily schedule at the project places] study at 17:00, meals at 18:00, relaxation at 19:00, closing at 20:00 or 21:00

### (4) Group staff

Local volunteers (teenagers to those in their 70s)

### (5) Subsidies from the Ward

Approx. 1 million yen to 2.5 million yen for one group (depending on how large the group and its activities are and how many times the activities occur)

### (6) Others

The project is usually held once or twice a week

### (7) Background

This project was held at two places in FY2015 and at five places in FY2016 (as of December, 2016)



Pairs of shoes worn by children all coming together to their own place

## Progress and Achievements

### (1) Three Concepts

- 1) Place... a cozy third place, not school, home, or a play area
- 2) Meeting... contact with grown-ups and society, not teachers, or family members
- 3) Growing up... a project for developing the heart (by interaction), the body (by eating), and the mind (by studying)

### (2) Any children who need support

This project is carried out without depending on any subsidies from the Japanese Government or the Metropolitan Government. Its system has been built at the discretion of the Ward. Therefore, unlike other municipalities, the Ward defines those children who can participate in this project as those who need a wide range of support, including not only children from families living in poverty but also children from single-parent families, socially withdrawn children, and children who have to spend the night alone because both of their parents work. This project is also intended for children aged 18 or under, which allows for continuous support up to high school students who have finished compulsory education.

### (3) Activities supported by local power

Various different places are utilized effectively for this project, including not only public facilities, but also restaurants on non-business days, rental conference rooms in the private sector, and empty houses. People who support children as volunteers range widely from social workers, probation officers and graduates from Arakawa Community College. Also, teachers at private tutoring schools, cooks and other professional staff join this activity, making it a project where local resourceful people can get together

## Effects of Project

### (1) Support for children

About 80 children used this project in FY2016. Nutritional support was offered by providing hot meals to children who didn't get dinner, and to those who ate nothing but instant noodles. Reports show that children who acquired the habit of learning at "their safe place" continued their studies at home, and got good grades at school. For children, having a place where they feel like they belong and are safe is an essential part of their life.

### (2) Expanding the network in the region

Safe places for children play the role of a hub in connecting a variety of related organizations including local communities, schools, children and family support centres, and the welfare sector.

## Problems and Responses

### (1) Balance in the region

This project is, in principle, started and executed, based on the will of people in the region. The Ward itself cannot choose the places to execute this project, so there are blank areas of the Ward where this project has not been executed. Efforts need to be made in the future to have this project executed in those blank areas.

### (2) Securing service quality

Staff members have to deal with parents and children who are placed in different types of environments, so even the volunteers are required to respond to them appropriately. In some of the places where this project is executed the staff members need to be trained and given proper information in order not to create any gaps in the quality of service.

### (3) Securing safety

Closing time is generally between 20:00 and 21:00. It is necessary to create a system that ensures participants return home safely because they include primary school children and girls.



Plenty of salad to be served to the children

## Outlook

Developing the project in a way that will enable the children to attend a safe place in their own neighborhood (with the aim of securing one place in each secondary school district).

## Reference URL

<https://www.city.arakawa.tokyo.jp/kosodate/shisetsu/kodomonoibasho.html>

## Contact

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