Background note on Soma Children's Orchestra

Until 11th March 2011, Soma in Fukushima prefecture had been renowned for its rich natural beauty and bio-diversity of Matsuura cove and profound cultural heritage such as Soma folk music and dance and wild horse chase festival as one of the oldest Samurai warriors’ hubs in Tohoku region since early 11th century. Multiple disasters of East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami changed everything and forced people, particularly children in Soma to be in a very vulnerable situation. 457 people were killed by earthquake and tsunami and, as a result, 44 children became either double or single orphans. Many children still live in temporary houses and need social protection from violence and neglect and, above all, suffer the aftershock of Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Power Station accident since there are some hot spots of radiation dose within the city boundary.

Considering this challenging situation, Sistema Japan, a recently created foundation with the mission to realise El Sistema based education programme for Japanese children, initiated a discussion with local municipality on the idea to establish an orchestra for primary school children as the place of their social interaction. The ideal is that Soma’s vulnerable children can actively participate in this orchestra through which they can live positively and initiate social actions for city’s reconstruction efforts.

Indeed Soma has a strong tradition on classical music. One of the primary schools has an orchestra for the last four decade and another junior high school has a wind orchestra which has regularly represented Fukushima prefecture at the national contest. Most importantly, there are a lot of passionate people from public and private domains who admire the spirit of El Sistema and believe in the power of music to transform the lives of children in Soma.

On behalf of Soma Children’s Orchestra, Sistema Japan wholeheartedly appreciates a generous offer from IPPNW benefit concert and will keep the updates of our on-going activities in Soma with you.