



Editor's letter: new beginnings

"It's the end of the world as we know it..." On March 17, six days after the devastating earthquake and tsunami hit north-eastern Japan, I was brushing my teeth in the morning and couldn't shake away the annoyingly chirpy chorus of an apocalypse song by indie megagroup REM: "It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine."

Not "fine" as in happy. With the TV news relaying images of death, destroyed lives, devastated buildings and the inexorably advancing tsunami in an endless cycle, I was as miserable as hell. And yet, with so much gone, with 10s of thousands of lives as yet unaccounted for or floundering in a filthy sea of misery in evacuation centers, how was it that I could still eat soba at my favourite noodle shop, still buy what I thought I needed and still turn up for work at 9am (or, let's be honest, 9.30am) on a Monday morning? Concerned phone calls flooded in from family and friends from all over the globe but my answer was always the same: "Don't worry, I'm fine" (although it's the end of the world as we know it).

So has the world changed since March 11? Probably not nearly enough. Here at Kyoto University, academics scrambled in the first months of the crisis to help society restack the deck of tumbled cards, offering a plethora of symposia emphasizing recovery. Restructuring. Rebuilding (but building new). Yet outside, the lights stayed on in Kansai and Kanto – albeit fewer of them than before – and government directives to cut electricity consumption to avoid power outages have already been relaxed. Prime Minister Noda's new ministry is now looking at putting the country's nuclear power stations back on the grid, with a view to phasing out nuclear power dependency in the future. Has radical restructuring for a cleaner, safer future been postponed?

Perhaps not. The articles in this, the first *Sansai* newsletter from the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies (GSGES), are all about saying no to feeling fine, no to simply feeling miserable and no to simply forgetting. They are about taking small steps to achieve change. Unsurprisingly, many of the voices featured here belong to students – always the first to push for change. But others belong to faculty members: some who have travelled to Tohoku to see what needs to be seen and to do what needs to be done, and some who have stayed in Kyoto to rethink questions about the future of Japan's north-east coastal region, energy policy in the wake of Fukushima and Japan's ailing economy.

As the editor of this newsletter, I feel honored to give a platform to just some of the individuals in this university who are rejecting "fine" – individuals ready to react to what felt like the end of the world, not with a pop song but with a new beginning.

Tracey Gannon, associate professor, GSGES

Toilet team brings eco-friendly sanitation to ravaged Tohoku

By Jane Singer, associate professor, GSGES



If you've never had a fascinating conversation about human excreta, you've never spoken with Harada Hidenori. Prof Harada, assistant professor at Kyoto University's Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies (GSGES), is an impassioned advocate for sustainable, pragmatic solutions to the problems of managing human waste.

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We rarely think about our need for a clean working toilet until we lack one – and then we can think about little else. This is especially true in the aftermath of natural disasters, when electricity and flowing water – the two modern necessities for managing “the big necessity,” as journalist Rose George calls excretion – are often cut off.

After the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku, Prof Harada decided to apply his environmental engineering expertise to constructing a simple, dry urine-diversion (UD) toilet that residents would be able to assemble themselves. He bought commonly available components at a local DIY shop and made a prototype, which he showed to two Kyoto University colleagues, Prof Ayako Fujieda and Prof Yoshihisa Shimizu. The three agreed to start the UD Toilet Project.

A urine-diversion toilet has two chambers for separating urine and feces, which enable both to be recovered and used as nutrient resources in agriculture. As Prof Harada explains, urine contains nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, all essential agricultural nutrients, while feces (“night soil”) has been applied to crop production across Asia for centuries so the concept is a familiar one. After urine and feces are collected separately, they are covered with ash or lime and dry media such as soil or carbonized rice husks to absorb moisture and control the odor. After storage outdoors for one month (for urine) or up to 12 months (for feces) to kill pathogens, both products can be applied in the fields or disposed of without polluting soil or ground water.

In 2002, while a graduate student at GSGES, Prof Harada spent five months introducing brick-and-cement UD toilets to an indigenous ethnic-minority village in the central highlands of Vietnam, so he already understood the basic mechanisms required. For emergency use in Japan, however, such a toilet had to be easy to construct, transport and dispose of after use. “I’m a specialist in excreta treatment, not a designer, so I sought help from an architect, Prof Hirohide Kobayashi of GSGES,” he says. “Prof Kobayas-

hi suggested we use boards made of polypropylene, a lightweight plastic polymer. This was one example of the collaboration we have achieved between professors from different fields.”

Prof Harada credits another project collaborator, Prof Yoshihisa Shimizu of Kyoto University’s Research Center for Environmental Quality Management, with forming the project team and initiating the activities. “Prof Shimizu recruited the staff of an Otsu-based, non-governmental organization working on disaster prevention and a bureaucrat from Otsu city [in Shiga prefecture] in charge of public health and sanitation. That enabled us to make contacts with officials in Ishinomaki [a tsunami-affected city in Miyagi prefecture] because Otsu had instigated post-tsunami household health visits in Ishinomaki,” he explains.

By mid-May, the UD toilet team, which also included Kyoto University staff member and Graduate School of Engineering professor Hirayama Nagahisa, had completed its working prototype and made its first visit to Ishinomaki. Of this first visit, Prof Harada says: “City officials told us that since conventional portable toilet units had been installed at all the shelters, there was no longer an urgent need for portable toilets.” According to the team’s analysis, local officials, overwhelmed at that time with myriad pressing needs, felt that they had fulfilled their sanitation responsibilities by installing a minimal number of temporary toilets so they had little interest in revisiting the subject.

However, not only was the number of toilets at many shelters inadequate, with only one lavatory for





up to 500 evacuees, many local residents, particularly those living at home, still did not have easy access to working toilets. Many residents were still living on the second floor of homes whose first floor had been destroyed by the tsunami. In Japan, toilets are typically on the first floor, so residents were forced to visit evacuation shelters for their sanitation needs. Since many residents in the area are elderly, this posed considerable difficulties.

The team continued to tinker with its prototype, aiming for ease of use by men and women, and secured funding for expanded production from a special disaster recovery budget established by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JSTA). On its second trip to Tohoku, the team distributed 44 toilets to community leaders and local governments and broadened its contacts with help from a local fish-processing company president and the head of an institute of environmental technology in Sendai. Prof Harada says: “From this experience we learned the importance of cultivating local connections when introducing a new technology and we also saw that things change quickly after a disaster. During our first visit, people seemed too tired to try new things but during the second visit they had more energy and willingness. Their needs are also changing rapidly, which has affected our project.”

I accompanied six team members – including two JSTA staff from Tokyo – on a fourth visit to the area in mid-July. At two nursing homes in the tsunami-affected Kesenuma area in Miyagi prefecture, the team showed the staff how to construct and use the



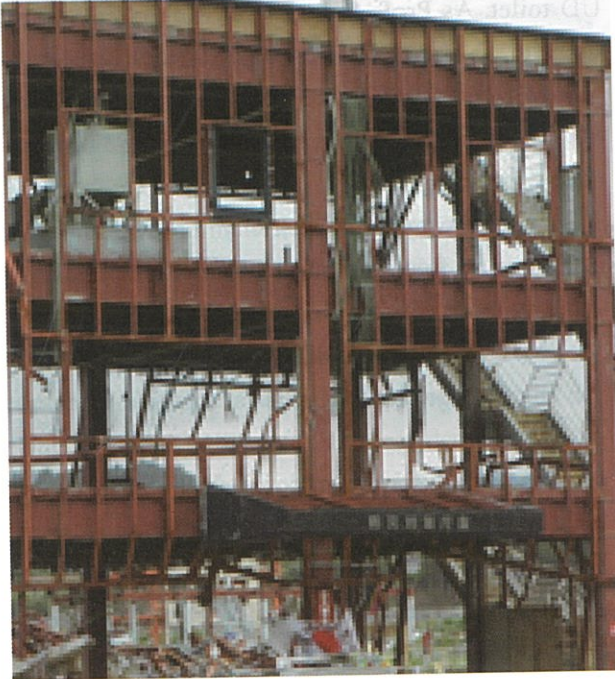
UD toilet. As Profs Fujieda and Harada deftly and without tools constructed a toilet using tongue-and-groove placement secured by plastic tape, Prof Shimizu explained the advantages of this kind of toilet during an emergency:

1. It needs no water or electricity
2. It can be freestanding or installed atop an ordinary toilet (for facilities with lavatories on each floor that can't be used without running water)
3. The flat components are easily stored when not needed
4. It is easy to transport (components for 10 toilets can fit in one good-sized cardboard box)
5. It is (relatively) easy to construct by following written instructions
6. It doesn't require sewage treatment, home septic tanks or suction trucks and the waste can be disposed of safely.

He added that excreta and urine can be used later for agriculture, reducing pollution and aiding crop productivity. Prof Shimizu showed how to attach plastic bags or a 15L bucket below the toilet seat to collect feces, explaining that it could be transferred to a larger bucket for storage in the garden after treatment with lime and soil. A plastic bag containing an odorless brown powder and a vial half-full of yellowish powder were then passed around, both of them containing final products ready for application to garden soil. The staff watched intently, with a few making suggestions for improvement, such as making the bags easier to remove.

One nurse explained that shortly after the tsunami, her colleagues were compelled to bury collected feces in the nearby forest so they clearly appreciated the benefits of this technology. Ten toilets were left as emergency supplies at each nursing home and the staff promised to provide them to local residents who might have need for them.

Leaving the second nursing home, we drove through a devastated open expanse that was once crowded with homes and shops in adjacent Minami Sanriku. Much of the rubble has been cleared – in



Kesennuma alone, some 1,500 truckloads of rubble are now removed every single day. Yet the neatly stacked columns of mangled cars, crumpled like used tissue, and the red steel skeleton of what was once an evacuation center – where dozens of evacuees died – testified to the incredible power of the 17m-high wall of water that washed much of this community away.

Prof Harada and his team now hope that their eco-friendly toilets can improve sanitation for locals, thereby helping them restore their dignity while contributing to a “green recovery” in Tohoku.

Be prepared: how social media can be used to inform foreigners in Kyoto of how best to cope in an emergency

By Glenn Fernandez, Farah Mulyasari, Ai Ideta, Satomi Inoue, Brett Peary and Thong Thi My Thi, members of the Environment and Disaster Education Working Group, International Environment and Disaster Management (IEDM) Laboratory, GSGES

What do you do when disaster strikes? It's a question that becomes more complex if you are caught up in

a disaster while you are abroad and can't speak the local language. Knowing where to go and what to do is almost impossible if you don't have access to a key lifeline – information.

Twenty-four foreigners were killed during the great eastern Japan earthquake and tsunami disaster in March. According to a Tokyo study, 70 per cent of disaster-management professionals identified foreigners to be highly vulnerable to disasters. Foreigners with little knowledge of Japanese are likely to find it difficult to understand warnings and instructions. Aside from the language barrier, differences in disaster-prevention drills, education and experience also exacerbate the situation. These factors suggest that risk-communication needs to be tailored to the cultural diversity of the community.

That's why a group of students from Kyoto University's Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies decided, three months after the Tohoku catastrophe, to conduct exploratory research into the role the mass media play in communicating the risk of disaster to foreigners in Kyoto. They interviewed six graduate students and three faculty members from Canada, Germany, Nepal, Peru, South Africa, Thailand and the UK to gain an idea of what would be the most suitable mass media to use to convey disaster-related information (risks, preparedness and mitigation, early warning, emergency response) to foreigners in Kyoto.

When asked about foreign involvement in the annual disaster-preparedness drills, the Kyoto City International Foundation (KCIF) said that only about 40 out of 40,000 foreigners take part. In Kyoto University, only around 25 out of more than 1,000 foreign students participate in the safety and security lecture organized twice a year by the Foreign Service Division (FSD).

The students interviewed said they were not familiar with the disaster-information materials provided by KCIF, such as a special multi-lingual radio program aired during emergencies, a pocket-sized earthquake-emergency action manual available in



five languages, a disaster-preparedness handbook available in six languages, subscription to a mailing list on the home page of KCIF's website and more printed materials. Likewise, the students were not aware of the various information posted on the bulletin boards near the FSD office or those posted on the university's website. The students admitted to having received a copy of the Handbook for International Students and being aware of – but not paying attention to – the pages in the handbook about disaster prevention. Some of the students also claimed to have heard about the safety lectures but said they were not able to attend because they clashed with other appointments, such as classes.

When asked about their preferred source of disaster information, the interviewees were unanimous in picking the internet. Commonly visited websites included those of the BBC and CNN. The interviewees didn't rely on printed newspapers. None of them thought of listening to the radio and none possessed one. English news was preferred over Japanese. For most of the interviewees, their inability to completely comprehend Japanese prevented them from accessing local mass media, although they acknowledged that important information could be obtained from such sources.

When the feedback from the foreign students was communicated to information providers such as KCIF and the International Center of Kyoto University, the institutions admitted that raising participation levels among foreigners has been an annual challenge. As traditional media such as publications and posters have proved ineffective in reaching a significant number of foreigners, the institutions said they would explore using modern mass media, such as the internet (notably email and social media) and mobile phones. Upon the suggestion of the researchers, KCIF immediately created a Facebook page (to access, search "kokoka"). Another suggestion was for FSD to put KCIF disaster preparedness materials in the orientation kit that is handed out to new foreign students. Students who were interviewed also

exhorted the need for foreign students to be proactive in seeking disaster-preparedness information, such as the location of the nearest evacuation site, how to get early warnings and how to help as volunteers during emergencies.

Cooperation and coordination with the embassies and consulates was also recommended. In the first few days of the March disaster, some embassies (notably those of Canada and Peru) were very active in getting in touch with their citizens. In the future, KCIF could link up with the embassies in disseminating risk and preparedness information to foreigners.

Being exploratory research, the initial findings and recommendations may not be applicable to the entire foreign population of Kyoto. More research is needed, involving not only those in academia but workers, tourists and immigrant spouses and children of Japanese citizens. To this end, the researchers suggested that KCIF gauge the effectiveness of its new Facebook page by measuring the level of foreigner participation in a disaster drill that was promoted on Facebook and scheduled for September 3. Unfortunately, this event was cancelled due to typhoon Talas, which struck the area on the same date. A future event, advertised through the KCIF Facebook page, will test how effective a Facebook presence is in reaching out to foreign residents.

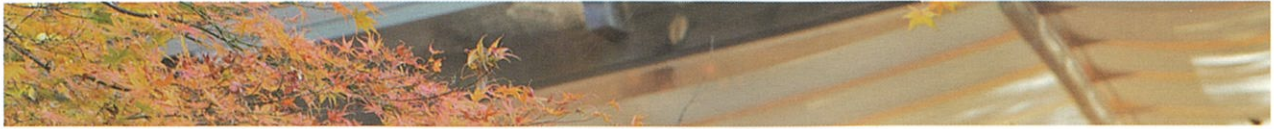
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Power shift: rethinking nuclear energy after the Fukushima meltdown

By Sarah Marchildon, second-year master's student, GSGES

Six months after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami devastated north-eastern Japan, the massive effort to remove debris, rebuild broken homes and mend shattered communities continues. But there is one mess that will take a lot longer to clean up.

The twisted, charred reactors that sit on the Fukushima Daiichi site are a powerful symbol of the last-



ing damage inflicted on the nuclear industry, which has long promoted nuclear power as a safe, reliable and clean source of energy. A difficult question remains: now what?

Switzerland and Germany took quick, decisive action in the aftermath of the disaster by announcing their complete withdrawal from nuclear power in the coming decades. Japan also announced it would phase out nuclear power.

But what happens next is much more complicated. Shutting nuclear power plants will leave us with an energy supply gap that will have to be made up somehow. Will we invest in renewable energy or will we rely on increased imports of polluting fossil fuels? Will we attempt to reduce the demand for energy in the first place or will we continue to act as if the oil will never run out?

These are critical decisions that involve all of us, which is why four professors from Kyoto University's graduate schools of Global Environmental Studies and Energy Science organized a symposium in July for students, faculty members and residents to discuss our energy future.

Aileen Mioko Smith, director of Green Action Kyoto, spoke about the declining role nuclear power will play in our energy future. Ms Mioko Smith, one

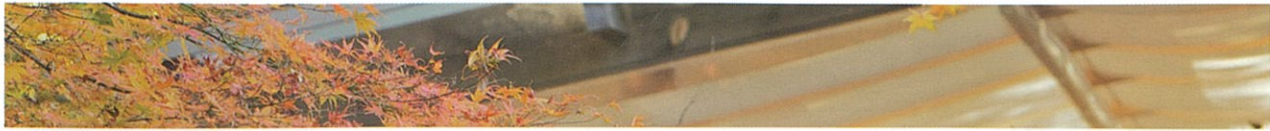
of Japan's leading voices on the need for sustainable energy policies, outlined several studies pointing to the decline of the nuclear industry. The Worldwatch Institute reported that in April there were 437 nuclear plants in operation worldwide – seven fewer than in 2002. Together these nuclear plants supply 13 per cent of the world's electricity.

The growing disenchantment with nuclear power is not just about the radioactive risk and issues of waste management; nuclear's biggest drawback is its exorbitant cost. Ms Mioko Smith presented several studies that show nuclear power is too expensive to be a real solution for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including a study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that outlined how the cost of nuclear doubled between 2003 and 2009.

Promoted as “too cheap to meter” in its infancy, nuclear has proven to be one of the most expensive sources of energy in history. “We can't afford to put our money on things that will take more time and cost more money,” said Ms Mioko Smith.

Before the March 11 disaster, nuclear energy accounted for about 30 per cent of Japan's power. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has pledged to devise a new energy policy by next summer that will reduce the country's dependence on nuclear power. However, he





Aileen Mioko Smith: nuclear power in decline

also plans to restart some of the nuclear plants taken offline after the catastrophe, provided they pass safety inspections.

In Germany, political leaders acted immediately to phase out nuclear power following the Tohoku disaster. The German government reversed its pro-nuclear stance and decided to abandon nuclear energy within 11 years. Eight of Germany's 17 nuclear reactors were taken off the grid after Fukushima.

Andreas Neef, a professor with Kyoto University's Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, said Germany has a long and complicated history of nuclear power. Successive centre-right governments have supported nuclear power while centre-left governments have tried to end it. And so Germany's relationship with nuclear has shifted depending on the government of the day. For example, a 2001 decision by the centre-left government to phase out nuclear power was reversed by the centre-right government in 2010. But the Fukushima crisis spurred Chancellor Angela Merkel to change her mind and declare an end to nuclear power by 2022.

As a result, Germany will now have to find 22 per cent of its electricity from other sources. Mr Neef said the country can fill the gap with a "renewable energy revolution".

The German government has set a target to produce 35 per cent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020 (the share of renewable in total energy consumption in Germany was 11 per cent in 2010). Mr



Andreas Neef: "renewable energy revolution"

Neef said investing in renewables pays off in shifting toward a cleaner, safer source of energy and in creating job opportunities. According to Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, 367,400 people worked in the country's renewable energy sector in 2010.

"Germany has become one of the world leaders in renewable energy technology," said Mr Neef.

Professor Satoshi Konishi of Kyoto University's Graduate School of Energy Science shared his vision for the role of smaller grids and the democratization of energy in Japan. He explained how this can build stability into the broader system. The problem with integrating renewables into the grid, according to Mr Konishi, is that they fluctuate too much and are, therefore, not reliable enough.

Mr Konishi said large-scale electricity grids are a major problem because they make cities susceptible to blackouts. "We need to have stability of the grid," he said. "Then we can get a stable supply of electricity day and night." Mr Konishi is in favour of creating a network of small-scale grids composed of many



Satoshi Konishi: "we need stability of the grid"



local energy sources and producers.

But it's not enough to just address the supply of energy; we need to look at how we can reduce demand in the first place. Amory Lovins, the Rocky Mountain Institute's chair and chief scientist, makes a compelling case for energy conservation. He writes: "New nuclear is so costly that shifting a dollar of spending from nuclear to efficiency protects the climate several-fold more than shifting a dollar from coal to nuclear."

Electricity conservation, especially in the summer months, has been promoted in Japan for years. The country's Cool Biz campaign, which encourages office workers to wear casual clothing in the summer to enable air conditioning to be set a few degrees higher, was launched in 2005. Following the Tohoku disaster, the push to conserve electricity took on a new urgency.

On June 1, the Environment Ministry launched the Super Cool Biz campaign, which recommends office workers set air conditioners at 28 degrees, switch off computers when not in use, take more summer vacations, shift their working hours to the morning and shed their suits and ties in favour of looser, cooler clothing. The Japanese government asked for a 15 per cent cut in electricity use in Tokyo and the Tohoku region to avoid blackouts. Environment Minister Ryu Matsumoto said he hoped the temporary measures would herald a more permanent lifestyle shift.

How we use and produce energy are both part of the discussion. The Fukushima disaster forced us to confront the very real risks of nuclear power and start thinking about safer, cleaner and more reliable alternatives. If there is any good to come out of the disaster, this is it.

Theory into practice: students at pioneering high school learn valuable lessons by volunteering in Tohoku

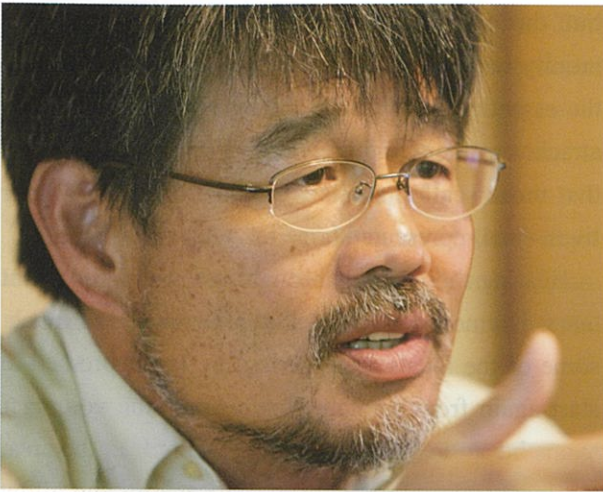
By Le Thi Hien Nhan, second-year master's student, GSGES

Kobe's Maiko High School is the only school in Japan that teaches a special course on environment and disaster mitigation. The course, which has been taught since 2002, centers on lessons learned from the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in Kobe. I spent three months observing the class as part of an internship with GSGES's Master's Program in Environmental Management. Shortly after the earthquake and tsunami that devastated north-eastern Japan in March this year, groups of Maiko students and teachers traveled to the disaster-affected areas to clean up residents' houses and to listen to their stories. I interviewed Mr Seiji Suwa, my former internship supervisor and a teacher at Maiko High School, who led the first group of students to the site, about the experience.

In the months after the Tohoku disaster, successive groups of Maiko High School students and teachers traveled 14 hours by bus from Kobe to the town of Higashimatsushima in north-eastern Japan. They came to talk to survivors of the disaster and to help in any way they could. During the day, they often shoveled mud from residents' houses. In the evening, they slept in the gymnasium of a local elementary school. It was difficult, dirty work that required not just good intentions but raw physical strength. The mud in the houses was often up to 20cm deep, lodged in every corner and even under the floors.

"The young people seemed very active and local people were grateful to see the students' passion for their volunteer work," says Mr Suwa.

The experience allowed the students to put what they had learned in the classroom into practice in a real-life disaster situation. But the main purpose of the trip was to enable students make their own observations and judgments about the importance of "being flexible according to the situation". In other words, it's important not to follow authority blindly. For example, in Iwate City, many people were evacuated to a temple that had been authorized as a shelter by the town government. But the temple wasn't high enough up the hill to avoid the tsunami's wave and, sadly, everyone inside the evacuation centre died.



Seiji Suwa: raising leaders of citizens

Similarly, 70 per cent of the pupils of Okawa Elementary School in Miyagi tragically lost their lives while being evacuated to a bridge in accordance with the instructions of an evacuation manual.

The students also spent time in Tohoku just listening to the stories of the survivors. “Weep with them, cry with them, listen to their experiences,” says Mr Suwa. “That is enough.”

These stories, together with the first-hand experiences of the students and teachers, will form the foundation of new course materials for disaster-mitigation education at Maiko High School. After the students returned to Kobe, they kept in touch with the residents of Higashimatsushima by mail and by phone. Touched by this ongoing support, residents who have lost everything send snacks unique to Tohoku to their new friends in Hyogo prefecture. In turn, the school sent more students and teachers to the area in July and August so the local people know they have not been forgotten.

Mr Suwa admits that most students who graduate from Maiko High School won't go on to become disaster-mitigation experts but he believes the skills they learn could help save lives in the future. He explains: “Our point is not to raise experts but to raise leaders of citizens. Imagine that one of our students one day becomes a kindergarten teacher. In a disaster, she might save the lives of her pupils. Or from her, they might learn how to save themselves.”

Pearls of wisdom: how student volunteers are helping to sow seeds of hope in the oyster beds of tsunami-hit Fukiurahama

By Melina Sakiyama, second-year master's student, GSGES

The earthquake that rocked eastern Japan on March 11 was the most powerful ever to hit the country. The magnitude-nine undersea megathrust was followed by a major tsunami that devastated entire villages along the coast, causing extensive damage with severe consequences such as the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster. The damage was so extensive it prompted former Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan to remark, “after the end of World War II, this is the toughest and most difficult crisis for Japan”.

This disaster really affected me. Two weeks before the earthquake struck, I was admiring the beautiful coastline of Matsushima and enjoying seafood in Shiogama, the birthplace of my grandfather. Both these cities in Miyagi were affected by the catastrophe and seeing the images of the tsunami washing away everything was unbelievable. After the initial shock, I realized I wanted to do something to help.

The opportunity came through Nippon Foundation's ROAD (Resilience will Overcome Any Disaster) project together with Gakuvo (Nippon Foundation Student Volunteer Center). Part of their remit is to organize student volunteer teams to support the affected areas. Translation support is available so international students are also able to assist. Together with 70 other students, I was part of the seventh batch of volunteers (helping out between June 10 and 13) and our destination was the city of Ishinomaki in Miyagi.

We were assigned to Fukiurahama, a fishing village that cultivates oysters. The local vicinity – the Ojika Peninsula in Miyagi – is known to have some of the best oysters in Japan. To get to the village, we had to pass through one of the most devastated areas and the sight was gruesome. Everything seemed so surreal. It was as if we were inside a disaster movie.



The silence inside the bus was punctuated by exclamations of shock as we witnessed cities reduced to debris. It was so overwhelming, many of us whispered: “What can we possibly do?” and “How can we help?”

Arriving in the village, the destruction continued: only the houses up in the hills were standing, everything else had been washed away, including the oyster racks in the sea. In the middle of the chaos, our job was to look through the debris and sort out any fishing equipment or wood that could be reused, including the buoys and ropes used for oyster cultivation.

While working with the local people, we had the chance to hear their stories of loss; many would talk about missing family members or ruined homes. We also learned how they cultivate oysters and how proud they are of their fishing heritage.

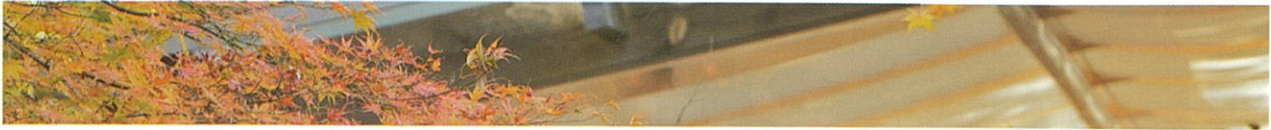
We spent most of the time gathering heavy and muddy scallop shells, which were tied along lines of ropes that were scattered through the area, sometimes digging deep into the mud to recover them. At first we didn’t know why we were gathering them

but, during our first break, Ishimori-san, the community leader, explained that scallop shells provide the essential substrate for the oyster’s “seed”, which attaches to them and then begins to mature. He said that those scallop shells were their “inochi” – their lives – and represented hope for a new beginning.

Hearing those words brought many of us to silent tears. Ishimori-san added that after losing so much, some of the locals were giving up, too depressed to start again from scratch. However, as the volunteer teams began to recover the shells and clean the area, the locals started to share in their energy and allow themselves to feel hope again. Now the fishermen are already working to recover their businesses. After feeling so impotent when we first faced the destruction, it was comforting to hear Ishimori-san’s words and I felt that I should be the one thanking him. He finished his speech cheerfully, inviting us to eat oysters next year and thanking us for gathering their “scattered lives”.

After his speech, everybody was motivated to keep working. I was still overwhelmed but, this time, I was focused and knew what I could do – every shell





I picked up represented a little piece of hope. This good mood continued through the entire weekend and, when we finished our work, we observed a minute's silence for those who had lost their lives and to mark three months since the earthquake struck.

On my journey back from Ishinomaki, I was physically tired but filled with emotional energy. Volunteering was an amazing learning experience that has

definitely given me a new perspective on life. I am very grateful to everybody involved and I genuinely hope to be able to return to Fukiurahama and eat the oysters.

If you would like to volunteer, visit:

<http://nikkeiyouth.com/2011/08/18/volunteers-september/> (English)

www.gakuvo.jp/index.html (Japanese)



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very grateful to
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http://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~ges/2011/08/18/volunteer.html
temporarily (English)
www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~ges/2011/08/18/volunteer.html



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