

“Ishinomaki” is our starting place

The 1st

“*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ① (October 3, 2017)

Since 3.11, I visit Ishinomaki from Kobe every month. I only can do small work. Why can I continue to visit?

Three days after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami occurred, students started to prepare for volunteer work. We received supporting goods from people who read about the newspaper. All supporting goods were piled up like a fort at around the office of the Kobe International Sustaining Organization. We got the first emergency vehicle permission pass in Hyogo Prefecture. We loaded two oil drums, a stove, and 10 bicycles on 2 trucks. We delivered medical supplies to Saito Hospital on March 20, which was the first visit for us. We felt sorry for the patients because they were just wearing pajamas while they were waiting in line for a temporary toilet outside under the snow cold sky. The one who was brought by an ambulance, was already dead because of over a half an hour drive on the rough road. It was just like a field hospital. After that, we went to the volunteer center of Ishinomaki Senshu University. Supplies from all Japan were piled up. But there was no enough manpower to deliver. We were told many times that “You should not show people that there are oils here”. They said that panic will occur if people see oils. Even though we were told to deliver oil stoves to an isolated Kama Elementary School, there were no roads as the map. A lot of cars were piled up and there was a heap of rubbles, and those made us difficult to drive through it. While paying attention to not to make punctures, we headed like a snail. It took us two hours to get to elementary school. Even it was the evacuation site, but it was severe cold weather and there were no heating materials at each classroom, so people were shaking themselves. From the third floor were not a suitable place to evacuate, and the place was rather waiting for infection. There was an irritating smell from the toilet. It was because the sewage function was stopped. The principal and the teachers who were neither sleeping nor taking rest thanked to us from their heart. The hearts of students from Kobe began to change.

The 2nd

“*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ② (October 9, 2017)

I wonder whether Ms. Shindo Son, who is a Korean resident in Japan, was safe or not. I headed to Onagawa to confirm her safety. It was because her life story movie “Oreno Kokorowa Maketeinai (=my heart is not defeated)” gave me a great impression. However, the destination had changed. When we saw the street of Watanoha at the Mangokuura, Tomoya Yamamoto (21 years old at that time) and others said “Is it fine to leave here like that?” The national route 398 was covered with soil and we could not see the road. The money in the cash register of the Seven-Eleven convenient stores was also robbed. The Watanoha branch of the 77 Bank was just guarded with a high fence. I saw that Mr. Kinichiro Satou was walking around his neighborhood at Watanoha 3 area for his own safety. 90% of the 21,000 people ran away

from the tsunami. I heard about their escape in the snowing while they were moving through seawater that covers up to their waist part. There were several houses that the first floor had been damaged or washed away because of the tsunami attack. At Watanoha, we began our work by removing rubbles first. It was to make it possible to recover the lifeline that necessary for electricity, gas, and water supply related vehicles to pass through. At the temporary shelter at Watanoha Elementary School, nearly 3,000 people were gathered. It was a difficult place for handicapped people with a disability certificate. Foods were distributed in the order in which people lined up, and people must be on the line to use toilets. One of the fist participants Yuichi Nakata who was a student of Osaka University is currently a doctor. This experience became the starting point of his life to live for others.

The key to restoration, reconstruction and rebuilding are more “recovering of mind” than the outlook. Those participants who noticed that, they had changed not only their views of their lives, but also their carriers. The experience at the disaster area changed a pharmacist to join the Doctors Without Borders, a worker at a construction company to become a nurse, and Yamamoto to work at welfare-related job after graduation from the university while he continues to do volunteer works.

The 3rd: **To the Affected area of the World “*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”**, Tsutsujino ③ (October 17, 2017)

This month, we did the 79th Tohoku Volunteer visit. We have been engaged in agriculture, forest, fishery, roadside improvement, and listening volunteer for 6 years. We devoted ourselves to “practice on the field rather than speaking” and moved around like a guerrilla. The victims who lost their home, family, and job have pain, suffering, anger, and mortification. At the door-to-door visit, they told us “I am all right” at the beginning. However, participants from the land of Kobe have experienced the earthquake disaster, who were not born or small at that time, asked “What kind of experience did you have at the 3.11 disaster?” Then, people open their minds and talked about their experience of hell that had never talked to the neighbors, other families, or anyone else. It may be because we were from outside. The victim who is the same age as my father is living alone. He said silently, “Why did everyone die and leave me alone?” Beer cans were piled up in the back of his house. There were a lot of convenience store lunch boxes. It was like a trashed house. He doesn’t wake up in the early morning, so he never is able to on time at the trash gathering. The values of young people who made contact with the victims were changed. They were made to think about “what is life?” and “unfair death”, and the consciousness to live for other people will grow. Even though we were taught by school education, home, and society about the heart to others from our childhood, we cannot solve problems easily such as bullying and suicides. However, young people were motivated to use their one-life as useful. They started to use their time, physical strength, and transportation fee for orphans who have lost their parents due to natural disasters, single women who have lost their husbands and refugees. At the Tanba Flood Disaster, Kumamoto Earthquake, and Northern Kyushu Rain Disaster, we also went there to

do “distributing foods”. The people of Ishinomaki also support the “Kayoko fund” for overseas orphans. I am grateful to the people of Ishinomaki,

The 4th: **Live together** “*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ④ (October 24, 2017)

Youth in Kobe came to do “co-existence” with the victims.

There is a preliminary thought that if we spend a lot of reconstruction budget and build facilities, the city of the fishery will be restored. It is an idea that does not share tears of victims on the ground. Since the Meiji Restoration, values that we resolve by things are common Achilles heels of all Japanese. It is the same idea that we can be relieved to feel that we fulfilled our duty as a human being as long as pay money for old age life, the happy husband and wife relationship, child and family life. If the politicians think about their work is different from ordinary people, and try to solve them financially about the problems, that is a dubious attitude.

Every volunteer group served to draw muds, remove rubbles, and change Tatami. Because they understand the pain of the affected area. On the site, we met with unfair death, people who were thrown out on the street, and people who lost their jobs. Even young people from Kansai cannot understand the Tohoku dialect, but their feelings call to each other without words.

Mr. Shoichi Abe and his wife at Watanoha 3-chome are waiting for students just like their sons and daughters every time. The current leader of our organization, Hirotaka Murakami was a Hikikomori. He sprayed hygiene materials over toilets. That was the time he was 20 years old when he was scared of a door-to-door visit. Mr. Abe said “Thank you” to Murakami who had not been talked with other people. It was the first time for him to be thanked by the others. The conversation did not start with money. Exchange by the heart with victims of Watanoha started. We did not end up with just a visit, observation, and experience. Since then, he became 27 years old and still is visiting Ishinomaki by driving 15 hours one way every month.

A clue for empathy transfer started to spin. The spinning “En (relationship)” was produced. A new family was born. The young people of Kobe began to live with the people of Ishinomaki. because they led us to go around the world.

The 5th: **Restoration of rice fields, mountains and bays**

“*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ⑤ (October 31, 2017)

Kenji Miyazawa wrote “Amenimo Makezu (Strong in the rain)” on November 3, 1931 (the reverse of 3.11). There is a feeling of the soul that common to Tohoku people.

In July 2011, by the guide of former principal Mr. Shoichi Abe, we visited the trace of the schools at Naburi, Funakoshi, and Yagawa at Ojika Peninsula with Professor Mr. Mitsugu Shinmen (Miyagi Gakuin Women's University) and Mr. Kinichiro Sato. Village where is

depopulating, aging, and declining birthrate was attacked by the large earthquake and tsunami. The words of the monk xxx at Nagori, “Although it is my personal opinion, as more education progress, more depopulation also progress” had a power. It is because the young generation abandons their hometown and lives in big cities.

Kenji Miyazawa let people in Hanamaki listen “the Pastoral Symphony” of Beethoven. He wanted to say people that “you do not need to go to the cities and it’s better to stay here”. Our organization marked the “restoration of rice fields, mountains and bays” as our flag. Our small help to rethink the hometown had started.

Mr. Masahiro Sato, who is the forerunner of ancient rice, lives at upstream of Kitakami River. He cooperated for the project of “rice field art” at Ishinomaki in 2012. By the support students from agricultural school from Hyogo Prefecture and Miyagi Prefecture and family of Mr. Masaru Abe, we could complete the rice field art at Sawada. The young people of Kobe had never been carried a sheaf of rice until that time.

There is Okawa Elementary School in Kamatani. We did tree thinning, pruning, firewood making, and char-grilling in the forest of the back of the school by the request from the forest owners' cooperative, and our face was covered black powder. Nobody praised us.

We could not do work properly, which were introduced by fishermen’s union (Chief, Mr. Kazuo Tanno), such as we collected seaweeds by riding on a boat of Mr. Takumi Honda, and hanged seeding collectors of an oyster of Mr. Yasuori Tanno at the sea.

Volunteers are just “Dekuno-bou”. However, it was proof that the affected victims were not forgotten from Japan by our “visiting” of the affected areas. “What amateurs can do?” Farmers and fishermen were unfriendly for the beginning. However, eventually, their kind smiles “Never be defeated by rain and wind” are restored.

The 6th: “**Share sufferings**” “*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ⑥ (November 7, 2017)
Kenji Miyazawa wrote to the suffering people, “Each person tries to break through difficulties, and encourage each other”.

In February 2014, students from Kyoto University, Kobe University, Kansei Gakuin University, and others also participated in the 36th batch. Intelligent young people, who will support the future of Japan, experienced. “Restoration of rice fields, mountains, and bays”, they did listening volunteers and sweated to remove snow. And they came to realize that there are “limit of cannot do”, such as broken family, divorce, and isolation death of the victims. They experienced their “helplessness”.

In one morning with snow, Mr. Masao Taguchi (75 years old) who “was living on the street” in Watanoha, stood alone. Without asking, everyone took out their hand warmers. That was the moment when the empathy finely honed sense of “empathize”. “One by one”, we approached Mr. Taguchi, who looked a scary person. On the other hand, he accepted us with kind smiles. All of about 30 participants were overwhelmed by his noble personality. Kenji’s words, “Let’s jump in and drown together. Let’s go together to the other side of death”,

lighting the fire to the participant's heart. The voice of "Are there any homeless people in Kobe?", "Let's serve foods to people" were raised. One week after our return to Kobe, students got together again. Food distribution started for homeless people who had been living at the Higashi Yuenchi (next to the Kobe City Hall) since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Rumiko Kusumoto became the head of the group, and she does "commensality" together with homeless people and becomes a family with them, and still she is continuing it.

Kenji said "Hinotsuitayouni Hagemashite Ike (= Go on with encouraging others speedily)", and "励ます Hagemasu (= encourage)" includes the Chinese character "力 Chikara(= power)". It became an origin to act positively in empathy, share-sufferings, and commensality. However, no one imagined that the victim who is facing loneliness, loneliness death, and isolated death rather gave us the "力(= power)" to us. We have been changed ourselves to "go" anywhere in this world "by yourself" with only carrying a sleeping bag, not by the group.

The 7th : "Relationship to share sufferings"

"Ishinomaki Kahoku", Tsutsujino ⑦ (November 14, 2017)

Volunteers are pursuing "寄す処 Yosuga (= the place to rely on)" from a neglected society. The 14th Dalai Lama visited Saikou-Ji (Chief Monk, Takanobu Higuchi) at Ishinomaki City on November 5, 2011. Buddhist monk Higuchi told us that Dalai Lama said at his lecture that "The reason people lost their lives by Tsunami was just what comes around goes around". Also Dalai Lama said "I want to share the pain as the same human being" in his book, and he preached the thought of "共苦 Kyo-Ku(=Share-sufferings)". In other words, he hopes that not only to feel "compassion" but also other people could escape from their sufferings. By the "Ishinomaki is our starting place", our organization started to head to the place where people are suffering severely by natural disasters. Young Japanese people started to "go" to the place as an "unsung hero" where no mass media would pick up for their topics, such as Vanuatu, Nepal, and Vietnam, regardless of with or without religions. Providing materials to everywhere we go is not our main purpose. We try to have "縁 En (= relationship)" and to be "Yosuga" where people's hearts can rely on, and we do "co-existence" and "share-sufferings" with the victims.

Eventually, the donation of many unnamed people from Japan gathered, and we could build orphan's houses. Also educational expenses "Kayoko Foundation" to orphans, who live in together, are also delivered by foster parents. The greatest desire of orphans that "I want to be an adult" is about to become true.

To bring back happy face to orphans, communication between a single woman who lost her husband, and a relationship with the aged person who lives alone, are more important matters to do than any other political principles, changing market economy and evolution. Of course, even you wish to go for overseas volunteers but cannot do it, it is also "Ku-en (=

connection born from sharing sufferings)” to “share-sufferings”.

“Yosuga” which is “Ku-en” has no relationship with the “leeway” of “time”, “money” and “job”. Recently now, the number of disasters is increasing and responsibilities for the poor people, who cannot be saved by only local communities, relatives, and graduates of the same school, are required more.

The 8th **Volunteer-Do** (= The Principle Way of Volunteer)

“*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ⑧ (November 21, 2017)

A volunteer is not a “movement”, but its more “activities” of “unpaid”, “voluntary” and “dialogue”.

Firstly, we do it “unpaid”. Participants pay their own travel expenses, food expenses and accommodation expenses to go to the site. From the economic view, it is “unpaid working” and seems lost. There is a custom of reciprocity in Japan. If someone helped you with planting rice, you will help harvesting in return. It has become an adhesion to join communities together. However, the volunteer-do never sells a favor and does not as for a return. We continue our activities with donations from hearty people. The word volunteer derived from the English word “will” and it is also originally from “Volo (on one’s own free will)” in Bible.

Secondly, it is “voluntary”. It is distinguished from “奉仕 Houshi (= to serve)”. “Houshi” is originally from “to serve in honor”. Japanese dictionary defines “Houshi” as “Serve without consider the interests of the state, society, and authorities”. It includes the hierarchical relationship between a “servant” and a “recipient”. When “奉 Hou” got together with “亻 (=person)”, the idea to think that appropriate to give salary was born. From the Meiji Restoration, “paid” led by the “government” became common. Such as transportation expenses are allocated. After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, NPOs were born nationwide like bamboo shoots after the rain. And paid-volunteers increased without noticing it. If the activity cannot be sub-organization of the “government” and out of subsidy, it will fade away.

Thirdly, “dialogue” is the lifeline. If there is a “groan”, we immediately go to the place. You cannot be close together to the victims on the desk. It is an onsite-based activity. To together mean completely to fit into the situation and convenience of the other person. There is no chance to swing to the position that I want to do volunteer but I want to do something fun now. It doesn’t ask for conditions, qualifications, and experiences. It shows a way of life through smiling, tone of voice, and “氣 Ki” of attitude. It based on individual activities, not movements. It is a way of life, so anyone can do volunteer work.

The 9th: **Before Yamase comes.**

“*Ishinomaki Kahoku*”, Tsutsujino ⑨ (November 28, 2017)

Yamase was said as the starving-death wind. I think of three respectable Tohoku people in the world. Shoeki Ando [1703-1762], who was a doctor at Hachinohe as well as an ecologist, felt sad about starvation due to Yamase. Tatsuji Fuse [1880-1953], a lawyer from Ishinomaki, said “If you live, live with the people. If you will die, die for the people”. And Kenji Miyazawa, who I talked about before.

What is common to all three people is deep “sympathy” to “human rights”.

The reason many people are started to die in an economically strong country Japan, is Yamase. In 1883 [Tempo 4 year], the Okuba region was damaged by big water flood and cold weather. The rice price increased because of a lean harvest, and the number of starvation death became 100,000 people in Tohoku region.

In Japan, the economic power country, there were about 17.6 (average) people were starved to death from 1981 to 1994. It has increased since 1995. According to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, 2053 people were starved to death in 2011. The total number of starvation from 1997 to 2011 was 25,525 people, and the annual average was 1,053 people. It means that 5.6 people per day and 1 person in every 4.2 hours are starved to death. Meanwhile, according to the government spokesperson, 19 million tons of foods are disposed of annually in Japan, due to reasons such as over expiration date.

Only rich people become more fulfilled. Wealthy people’s cup is large, so drops do not fall down to below. The company also keeps profit within limited people and does not distribute it to society and its own employees. It is a system that only shareholders can get profit. Students cannot afford to buy a PC even they have several part-time jobs. NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), Hikikomori, high school dropouts are becoming not rare. Housewives are also trying to use only 10,000 yen as a meal cost per month. After the war, during the poor time, people were living together. However, communication ability disappears now, and people’s heart becomes narrow and has no interests to others. Human relations become tenuous bond.

Probably, Tatsuji Fuse could have to change the mechanism to make more use of remedies such as livelihood protection. However, the wind, atmosphere, and thoughts that are currently covering entire Japan, do not have “受縁力 Jyu-En-Ryoku (= receive/ relationship/ power)”. People refuse the right that possible to gain if you apply for it. People do not want to become a receiver because of public image, miserliness, and diffident, with saying “I am still 65 years old”, “There are more suffering people than me”, and “Because I come from a good family”. You cannot hand over your desperation to the world insecure.

Because Japan relies on importing food from overseas, sooner or later, we will face a crisis of food shortage.

If we do not recover local mountains, local seas, and rice fields, there will be many starvation deaths by Yamase. I expect that the wind of “耕支縁 Kou-Shi-En (cultivation/supporting/relationship)” from the Tohoku region that people will cultivate their

own foods by themselves at village society.

Kobe International Sustaining Organization, Director Yoshio Iwamura