

報告

Report of Collaborative Volunteer Trip Between Iwate Prefectural University  
and Ohio University  
岩手県立大学とオハイオ大学の共同ボランティア活動に関する報告

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共同, 震災復興支援活動、被災地

1. Introduction

This paper reports on the second collaborative volunteer trip between Iwate Prefectural University (IPU hereafter) and Ohio University (OU hereafter). The first trip was made in September, 2011. The second was conducted from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 2012.

The trip included the following activities: introduction of each university, visit to Miyako Junior College and disaster areas, listening to stories of victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake which occurred on March 11, 2011, participating in local group activities such as playing sports with school children and helping them with their school work, discussion among the students on the topic “What can we do to help?”, and participating in “Nanohana Project”, removing weeds from the field of canola plants along Otsuchi River, an area severely damaged by the tsunami.

The total number of participants of the second trip was 51, 28 from IPU and 23 from OU.

2. Participants

16 students and 7 staff members joined the trip from Ohio University. The staff members from OU were Dr Pamela Benoit, Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr Joseph Shields, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College, Dr Thomas Scanlan, Associate Dean of College of Arts and Sciences, Dr Christopher Thompson, Chair of Department of Linguistics, Greg King, Associate Professor of Chubu University, where the OU students were studying at that time, and two alumni, Yuko Kuwahara and Todd Fouts who live and work in Japan.

From IPU, there were 21 students, 16 were from Morioka Junior College, 3 were from the Faculty of Software and Information Sciences and 2 were from the Faculty of Social Welfare. Four staff members accompanied the trip for the whole duration. They were Shigeru Kikuchi, the Head of the General and Financial Affairs Section in the Planning Office,

Akihiko Takahashi, staff member of the Planning Office, Dr Sanae Kumamoto and Harumi Ogawa from the Department of International Cultural Studies at Morioka Junior College. On the second day, three more staff members arrived from IPU. They were Shigenori Hosoda, Director of Disaster Relief Centre of IPU, Yukie Sakura and Yukiko Watanabe from the Faculty of Social Welfare.

3. Overall Schedule

The table below explains the overall schedule of the trip.

Date	Place	Activity
Sep. 21	Takizawa Village Miyako City	Visit to the Vice-President Dr Tamio Sasaki, Guided tour around the university by the Junior College students, Introduction of each university, Lecture on Disaster relief activities of IPU, Visit to Miyako Junior College and affected districts in Miyako
Sep. 22	Miyako City	am) In 6 districts in Miyako, the students participated in different volunteer activities such as craft, sports, karaoke and study support. pm) The group heard the talks of Mr Akamatsu, the director of “Green Pier Miyako” and of a volunteer organization Ginga-Net. Group discussion was held after that on the topic, “What can we do to help?”
Sep. 23	Otsuchi Town	Participated in “Nanohana Project” and cleaned the riverside of Otsuchi by weeding canola plant fields. Visit Otsuchi Town festival.

Prior to the trip itself, the students were encouraged to communicate via e-mail to promote their friendship. A questionnaire was given to all the OU and IPU students at the end of the trip to elicit their views towards their experience. (See Appendix 1 for the questions.)

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#### 4. Description of Each Activity

##### Sept. 21

OU students, staff members and alumni arrived. While IPU students gave a guide tour around the university to OU students, the staff members paid a courtesy call on Dr Tamio Sasaki. Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

Then, all students and staff members of both IPU and OU gathered in a classroom and introduced each university.

In the afternoon, the company headed towards the coast on a bus.

At first, the group visited Miyako Junior College, which is a satellite school of IPU. Professor Masahiro Ueda, Dean of Miyako Junior College and Dr Nobuhiro Tanaka gave a lecture on Disaster Relief activities which the faculty and the students of Miyako Junior College have been involved in.

The last activity on this day was probably the most intense. A local guide Ms Junko Sasaki got on the bus and told the group her personal story related to the catastrophe and tsunami. Although a lot of similar stories have been reported repeatedly on TV and newspapers, it was the first time for most students to hear such first-hand personal experience from a victim of the catastrophe. The group was taken to a building which was formerly known as “Miyako Kanko Hotel”.

Ms Sasaki warned the group not to make recordings of any of the video images she was about to show. The tsunami images were taken by the manager of the hotel in the very room where the group was sitting, which had never been released to the media. It was a penetrating experience to watch those images in this environment, with the victim guide. Until that moment, no one was aware of what was going to be shown or told to the group.

After this experience, the group headed towards the accommodation “Greenpia Sanriku Miyako”.

##### Sept. 22

The OU and IPU students and staff members were divided into six different groups and went to six different places based on the students’ preferences. The activities have been organized with the help of Social Welfare Association of Miyako City. The venues included community centres built in temporary housing areas and a school playground. Depending on where they were, the OU and IPU students spent time with the local school children playing games and sports, helping the children with their studies, singing karaoke and doing craftwork together.

After going back to Greenpia Sanriku Miyako at lunch time, the group heard a talk given by Mr Akamatsu, the director of Greenpia Sanriku Miyako. He told the group what it was like there during the

early stages after the earthquake and tsunami and what kind of measures were taken to ensure people’s safety and health. Again, it was such an invaluable experience for everyone in the group to hear the talk of Mr Akamatsu the director of Greenpia Miyako, the very place where the group was staying during the trip. Following the talk of Mr Akamatsu, a volunteer organization Ginga Net gave a presentation about their disaster relief activities. Ginga Net is a student centred volunteer organisation based in Iwate, initially instituted by students and a faculty staff member of IPU. Group discussion was held after that on the topic, “What can we do to help?”

##### Sept. 23

The group participated in the “Nanohana Project” and cleaned the riverside of Otsuchi by weeding the fields of nanohana (canola) plants. Before starting to work in the fields, Mr Bunzo Kanayama, a former truck driver, took the group into the gymnasium of Otsuchi Junior High School, which was damaged by the tsunami. It was also used as a morgue for several weeks after the tsunami water has been cleared. There, Mr Kanayama told the group why he started the project. It was to pray for victims of the catastrophe. He lost more than 80 friends.

After that, the group was lead by a member of the Social Welfare Association to the top of the hill of Otsuchi Town, where the town overview was seen. The town was annihilated and there no longer was a “town”. He was telling the group that some people were not strong enough to climb up the hill when the tsunami hit.

Coincidentally, Otsuchi Town Festival was being held on that day, where the group had the opportunity to watch the festival with a deeper perspective. Thus, a not so standard cultural experience marked the end of the trip.

#### 5. From the students’ comments

It is clear from the students’ comments that this trip had a powerful influence on all of them. Selected comments are shown here. The comments that had originally been written in Japanese were translated into English by the authors.

##### About having an e-pal

- It helped me to get familiar with Iwate as a location and get to know one of Japanese IPU students. My e-pal told me about fun and interesting info about Iwate. —OU student
- 直接会って楽しみが倍増した。(It helped feel more excited about meeting.) —IPU student
- 親近感とチームワークが増した。(It promoted friendship and teamwork.) —IPU student

##### About the volunteer activities in Miyako

- Definitely a life changing experience; made me to want to help them more. —OU student
- 心のケアのボラ必要性を実感した。(I realised the importance of volunteer activities that involve psychological care.)
- 学生でもできることあると知った。(I now know there are things we can do to help.) —IPU student
- 子ども達の笑顔で幸せをもらえた。(The smiles of children made me happy.) —IPU student

#### About the group discussion

- It was productive activity that drew everyone's opinions (both American/Japanese). Since some ideas are out of the box and new, maybe those ideas can help spark more community involvements. —OU student
- アメリカのボラ事情も知れてよかった。(It was good to learn about volunteering in America.) —IPU student
- 日本人が思いつかない考えが共有できた。(American students shared their ideas which we Japanese students didn't have.) —IPU student
- 学生目線で話し共感することができた。(We could talk with students' perspectives.) —IPU student
- 大学の講義からは学べないことを学んだ。(We learnt the kinds of things we cannot learn from university lectures.)
- やる気になればできることもたくさんあると気づけてよかった。(I am glad to know there are things we can do to help if we want to.) —IPU student

#### Impressions towards the affected areas: Before and after

- Seeing it in person and experiencing it made it so much more of a personal experience than that just watching the 3.11 on TV. —OU student
- Before I wasn't sure what I was going to see, and was afraid that I might not feel any kind of connection. After I realized that not only do I feel connected, I want to do more to help. —OU student
- 被災地を経験すると TV とは違った見方ができる。(After seeing the disaster areas myself, I got to learn to see it differently from a TV point of view.) —IPU student
- 大変な状況でも笑顔でがんばっている住民の方々に感動した。(I was moved by the people who are striving while smiling in the continuing severe conditions.) —IPU student
- 想像以上に復興が進んでいないと知りもっと現実を多くの人に知って欲しい。(I would like more people to know about the reality of the disaster areas whose reconstruction is taking longer than I had imagined.) —IPU student
- 被災地のニーズが刻々と変化することを知った。(I got to learn the needs of the affected areas keep changing.) —IPU student

#### Other comments

- This was an amazing experience. Not only do you get to help those affected, you gain insight into Japanese culture. —OU student
- 2泊3日は短く感じられ1週間位ボランティアしたかった。ボラに関わってくださった先生方や事務の方々に感謝。(Three day trip was very short. I wish it was a weeklong volunteering trip. Thank you all the teachers and staff members who were involved in planning the trip.) —IPU student
- 自己負担でも構わないから1週間ほど泊りがけでボランティアしたいと思った。ボラの力の限界はあるが、復興支援したい。(I don't mind paying more if I could go on a weeklong trip. What you can do as a volunteer is limited, but I would like to give disaster relief help.) —IPU student
- 必死に英語で伝えようとして、必死にオハイオ大生が聞いてくれて、伝わったときは嬉しかった。学ぶこと多く充実した3日間だった。友達もたくさんできて嬉しい。(I tried hard to speak in English and the OU students really tried to understand me. I was really happy when we could communicate with each other. It was such a rewarding opportunity. I am so glad that I could make many friends.) —IPU student

#### 6. Reflections and Future Implications

As can be understood from the students' comments, it is obvious that this trip served as a life changing educational experience for the students. However, the following things need to be reconsidered and planned more carefully for similar future trips for improvement and sustainability.

The two teachers of Morioka Junior College were obliged to coordinate the trip, give instructions to the group, and act as tour guides and interpreters while making sure the group of 51 people could follow the schedule without delays and problems, which was extremely arduous. In addition, where responsibilities for this whole project and the trip lied was left unclear. For example, the information as to what the group was to be engaged in on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September was not given until the previous day and the teachers ended up giving new information and handouts on the bus to the group without understanding the procedure themselves. It was very difficult to manage this many people with so many variables and uncertainty. These things need to be improved in future.

Simultaneous interpretation was often demanded without prior request and notifications and it gave high pressure to the teachers who had to act as interpreters. It is strongly advised that an interpreter is hired for the trip so that the quality of interpretation is ensured and the teachers can concentrate on escorting the group.

The involvement of more people is needed in future in terms of coordinating the trip, communicating with Ohio University and different facilities and organisations in the trip areas, and actual escorting teachers. The work load needs to be shared for a long term project.

Some faculty of Morioka Junior College are already involved in some disaster relief activities. It would be desirable to plan similar future trips based on the experience and expertise of faculty of Morioka Junior College.

These are the things that need to be improved to continue similar projects between the two universities.

#### 【要旨】

本論は、平成24年9月21日から23日にかけて行われた岩手県立大学とオハイオ大学との復興支援共同ボランティア活動の記録である。両大学あわせて約50名の学生および教職員が、宮古市内と大槌町内において共同ボランティア作業に従事した。

第2回目となる今回は、活動実施後に、両大学の参加学生対象にアンケートを実施した。その結果、宮古市内および大槌町における共同ボランティア活動と意見交換会を通して、非常に意義深い体験となったことが分かった。現地での活動を通し、新たな観点から被災地復興についての考察を深めることができた。

#### Appendix 1: Questions on the questionnaire

1. How did having an e-pal help you prepare for the volunteer trip?
2. What did you think of the volunteer activities in Miyako on the 22<sup>nd</sup>?
3. What did you think of the discussion in Miyako on the 22<sup>nd</sup>?
4. What did you think of the volunteer activities in Otsuchi (23<sup>rd</sup>)?
5. How has your impression on the affected areas changed before and after the volunteer trip?
6. Would you like to participate in this kind of project again?
7. Would you recommend this experience to a student at your university? Why/Why not?

#### Appendix 2: Photos from the trip



Meeting OU students



Giving a tour around IPU



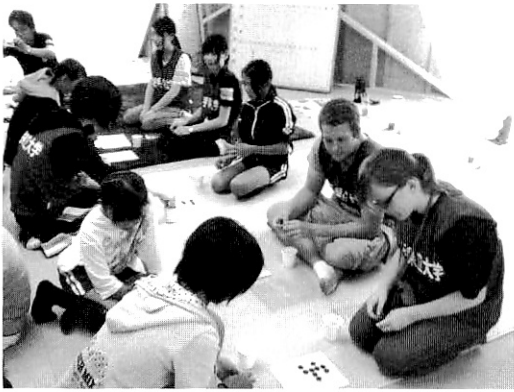
Former Miyako Kanko Hotel



All OU and IPU members



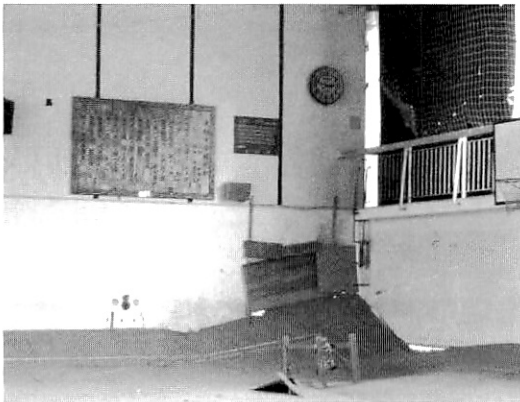
Playing dodge ball with children



Playing indoor games



Otsuchi Town Festival



Otsuchi Junior High School



Saying good-bye to OU students



Working in the nanohana (canola) field



IPU and OU staff on the trip

(From front left, Shigeru Kikuchi, Harumi Ogawa, Pamela Benoit, Yuko Kuwahara, Sanae Kumamoto and Akihiko Takahashi, from back left, Joseph Shields, Michael Fouts, Thomas Scanlan, Christopher Thompson and Gregory King)

### Acknowledgements

Our special thanks go to those in the picture just above, who worked ardently to make this project possible and meaningful.



Annihilated Otsuchi Town