

## Report for FOLENs Seminar: March 7 – 9

Ei Ei Theint (M2)

FOLENs' seminar was held in the affected area of Tohoku earthquake and tsunami from March 7 to 9. The topic of this seminar was named as "disaster education". It was learnt as the principles or rules of volunteers before going there and the performance of volunteer activities by working together with other peoples in the disasters affected area and by discussing with local peoples and/or the person from volunteer organization especially RQ. Our group had 8 members including FOLENs' faculty members; Prof: Taka Furuichi and Prof: Sachi Ninomiya Lim. We stayed in RQ local base office in former primary school at Tome city. RQ is volunteer organization. It was organized with no permanent salaries staffs.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March, our group joined volunteer activity in Jifuku-ji Buddhist temple, Motoyoshi area, Kesen-numa city. Our group volunteered by bringing gravels to make the concrete floor in front of the temple and near the temple. In the break time, we had chance to communicate with local peoples. The monks from this temple said that they were not able to see the seashore before tsunami happened because there were so many buildings that blocked to see the seashore. However, nowadays we could see directly to the sea from the temple because Tsunami devastated almost all of the buildings near the seashore. There were many garbage piles near the temples. Furthermore, we saw many trucks bringing the garbage to pile up. We heard that the clean up activity for the devastated area have been doing and about 5% of the total damaged materials had been cleaned up. There may still need many volunteers for those cleaning activities. At about 3:00 pm, we left from the temple. On the way that we went back to Tome, we saw the buildings, streets, cars, railways that were devastated by tsunami. On the discussion time after dinner, Urata san from the RQ volunteer organization presented their activities with power point slides. We heard that many people participated in volunteer activity during holidays. One of volunteer activities is collecting photos and cleaning those photos. I really impress about this because this activity showed that the Japanese peoples are very kind and sympathize or respect about the individual feelings.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> March, we went to the Karakuwa area, Kesen-numa city. Our group joined volunteer activity in Oyster farming. We helped in preparation of shells to grow the Oyster. We also rode the boat and learned how to grow Oyster along the seas. The fishermen said that there were many Oyster farms in this area before disaster happened. Many Oyster farms and boats were damaged and lost under the Tsunami. Fortunately, only his boat that we rode was remained. Although Tsunami brought many disadvantages such as lost of properties and families, it also brought the good condition for Oyster growing. Due to the mineral nutrients that left by Tsunami, now Oysters can be harvested about 6 months earlier than before.

By seeing the disaster affected views and by hearing these stories, I felt very sorry and sympathized for those disaster victims. At the same time, I aware that Japanese people has very strong mind and good attitude. Because we saw very stable behavior of Japanese in TV news that was broadcasted at immediately after disaster happened. They still love the sea because they understand that sea not only brought disadvantage as Tsunami but also gave the beautiful land and natural resources. So, they have optimist mind. Furthermore, many people; both young and old generations actively participate in volunteer activity. Thus, I believe that this strong mental and physical power of Japanese could rebuild and recover those disaster affected areas very quickly.

Finally, I would like to say that the seminar in Tohoku was very effective for all of us because nowadays disaster happens frequently around the world. So, we should know how we should help each other when disasters happen. We should also take the behavior of Japanese; "how they face and struggle the unexpected situation" as a good example. Therefore, the experience in Tohoku is very valuable for environmental leaders so that it is very important to protect our environment and it is necessary to maximize our ability how to face when natural disasters happen.