

Chinami Horiuchi

Minami Ishi

「Let's change ourselves to make a better world.」

~What should we do to make good relations in the world? ~

Hello, everyone. I am Chinami Horiuchi. I am Minami Ishi.

First, How many of you have lived on a ship with people from 12 different countries?
This is our outline.

The thing I and Minami have in common is that both have participated in the Ship for World Youth program. This program, organized by the Government of Japan, is a cultural exchange program that deepens mutual understanding between Japan and the world. We learned from this experience how to make our world a better world by making international contribution.

During this program, I visited the village of Fiji, which is a developing country. Because I felt their education system was not enough, I asked the people of the village "Do you think that graduating from a university will make your life better?" One of them answered "I don't think that education will make my life happier." She also said "I prefer living the traditional and natural life of our village. Have you heard of the old saying "More education, more stupid". I was embarrassed. She said when people who graduate from a university come back to their home village, they are ashamed of the old life style of the village and they try to force the advanced technology and lifestyle. This is a bit similar to the international contributions done by developed countries.

This type of support can destroy the culture and tradition. Real international contributions should begin with mutual understanding. After that, those contributions will make better relations.

Next, Minami will tell you about her experience.

Let me talk about my point of view as a volunteer. Do you have a Positive, or a Negative attitude towards voluntary activities? I personally had a negative attitude, because I just couldn't give away my time or money to people that I have never met before. However, that attitude was changed by a Kenyan man, who I met on this ship.

He was born in the Slums. He made a lot of effort to study and graduate from junior college by working after school hours to pay for his tuition. Now, he is working to help the poor people in Kenya to improve their education system. His main voluntary activity is running an elementary school in the slum area, but his main problem is the lack of funds. He asked me to help his project. I really wanted to help him because he was my friend. However, that wasn't good enough to make me concentrate on volunteering. I could not realize the full potential of his story, therefore I had to go there and visit the school.

What I saw there was a big group of children who are full of enthusiasm, and wanted to study as much as they could. But they couldn't do it. They were children who were hungry, and forced to work because of the very poor situation of their families. Seeing that situation with my own eyes, I was able to empathize with my Kenyan friend, and imagine how his life was before, when he was a kid. It made me want to do action for him.

When it comes to international contribution, co-operation, or volunteering, the most important thing is that you don't just seek the knowledge, but also experience by yourself the life of the people you want to help.

The bond like this made us take a small first step toward making a better world. The more people like us who understand essence of international contribution there are, the better it can become. Connected by small bonds, we have the power to change the world.