

Volunteer Activity of American Students

2011 ALC2 Final Project

Mikuni Yamae

SECTION 4
MR. DATIKO

On March 11th, 2011 an unprecedented earthquake hit the East Japan. When the earthquake hit, I was in my high school. I'd never felt such a big shake before. The scene around my high school and the pictures of the tsunami I watched on TV were very shocking. The next day, I started to look into how to go to the Tohoku district as a volunteer, but all of the transportation to Tohoku had stopped. However, I found there is a need for volunteers in Urayasu, which is a city in Chiba and because it is located on reclaimed land, the ground liquefied and much mud spouted out. I decided to go to Urayasu to do volunteer work. It was the first time that I had worked as a volunteer. I worked 5 days. I mainly got rid of mud from houses and roads.

Because of this earthquake and my own volunteer experience, I thought of some questions. Why were the numbers of volunteers so small in Japan? Why didn't people volunteer to work? The first question is often argued in Japan. Even though many people went to Tohoku as volunteers, the numbers are smaller than that of the Hanshin earthquake, which hit the Kansai district in 1995. Moreover, except for volunteers who work when a disaster such as this earthquake, it is said that the number

of volunteers is decreasing much more. I felt the second question strongly while I was working at Urayasu. At first, I thought the reason why I had become a volunteer was to help those suffering. But I couldn't understand the motivation of the other volunteers. There were some people who loafed on their job. Moreover, many people criticized that volunteer work was done just for selfish self-satisfaction. Then I began to think I was doing volunteer work for myself because getting rid of mud is simple heavy work and suitable for people who have more power than me. So, I quit my volunteer work.

On the other hand, it is said that many Americans do volunteer work positively. What is the difference between the U.S. and Japan? Why do they do volunteer work? Actually I have a plan to go to Tohoku as a volunteer in September. Before this, through this work, I want to answer these questions.

When we think about the reason that many American people do volunteer work, we usually think about their religion. Christianity, many Americans believe in, values benevolence. It is said that this lesson encourages American people to do volunteer work. But the reason is not only their religion. For example, more young people do volunteer work than before today, this reason is said that many organizations

make volunteer programs for teenagers to improve their skill (R. Dale Safrit). One reason is to write their resume and to enter a good university or get a good job. But, it's not only selfish reason. Also, it is because of the giving spirit (Blocker). Blocker also said, in his survey, that "The sentiment that "volunteering helps me and others" was the most commonly cited reason for volunteering" (Blocker). There are two main reasons that American students do volunteer. One is for volunteers themselves. Through volunteer work, they can improve themselves and get some advantage to enter university or get a job. The other one is for someone else. We can help someone and contribute to society.

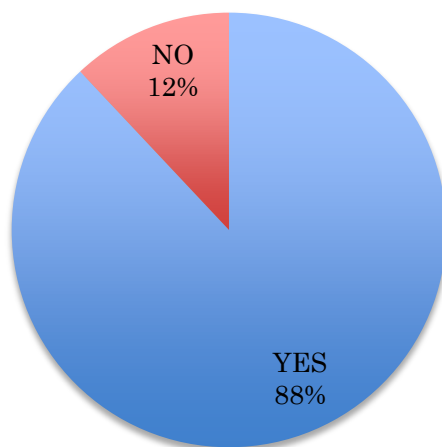
To know the differences between American students and Japanese students about their volunteer experiences and attitudes, I conducted a survey. I asked 25 American college or graduate students (15 males and 11 females) and 33 Japanese students (17 males and 16 females). I asked American students directly on Stanford campus and asked Japanese students online, through twitter, facebook, mixi, which is a Japanese social networking site. When I decided the matters of my survey, I referred to a webpage, VOLUNTEERING IN THE UNITED STATES — 2010.

Before I started my survey, I frame some hypotheses. One is that American students do volunteer work more frequently than Japanese students. Another is that American students are less likely to think of volunteer as self-satisfaction activity because they have more volunteer experiences and find out some values of volunteer.

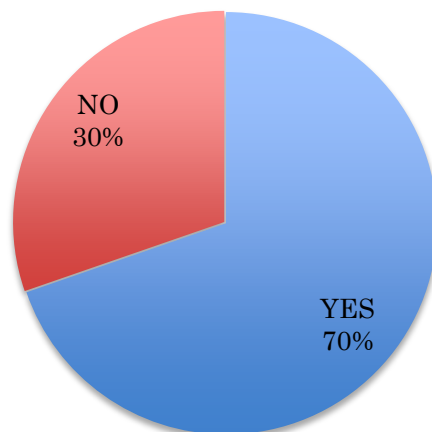
At First, I asked them whether they have any volunteer experience or not. According to my survey, 21 American students (88%) have done some volunteer works. On the other hands, 23 Japanese students (70%) have done some volunteer works. As expected, more American students have some volunteer experiences than Japanese students.

Have you done any volunteering?

US



JP



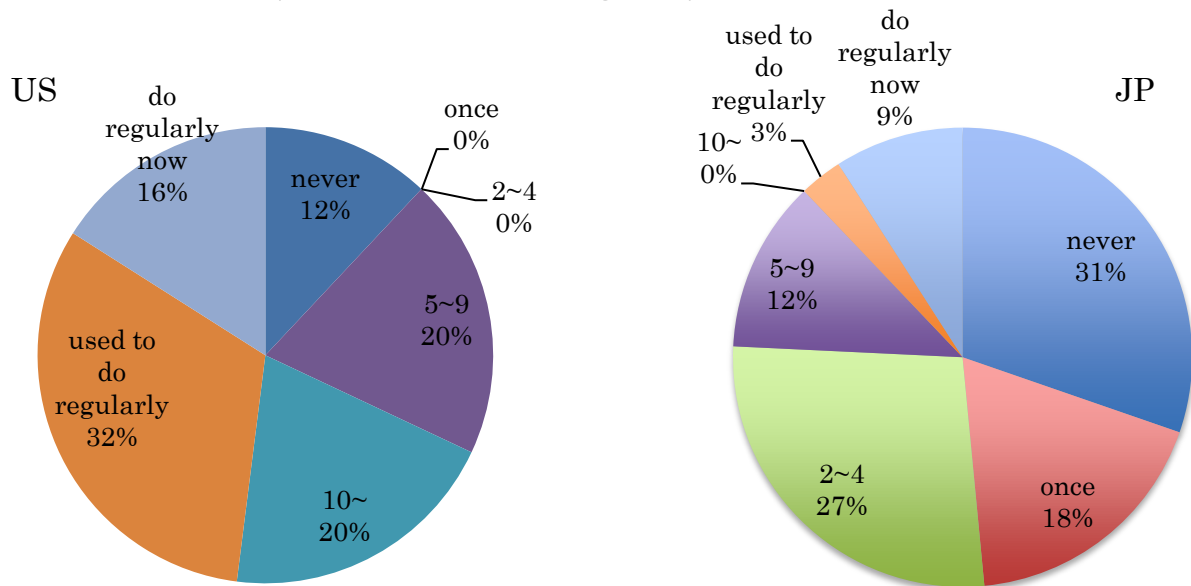
Next question is whether they volunteer regularly now or not. As a result, I

know that a few students in both the U.S. and Japan (4 American students, 16% and 3 Japanese students, 9%) do volunteer activity regularly now. I suppose one reason is that the time I conducted my survey is in summer vacation, and they tend to do more volunteer works in school term than in summer vacation. In fact, some students told me that they did volunteer work in school term.

Although I couldn't discover the significant difference from the second question, I could find big one from the third question. It is how many times they have you done volunteer works in their lives. 8 American students answered that they used to do volunteering regularly (It means that they cannot count how many times they did volunteering.). Putting the second question's result, 48% students have an experience of regular volunteer work. Moreover no one answered that he/she had only one or 2~4 times volunteer experiences. Therefore, American students who have done volunteering are likely to do it over 5 times. In contrast, in Japan, only one person answered that she used to do volunteer work regularly and no one answered he/she have done volunteer work 10 times or more. One forth students who have done volunteering have done it only once and two thirds of them have done it less than 5 times. In conclusion, it's a

marked difference of the number of volunteer experience between American students and Japanese students.

How many times have you done volunteer work? Have you done volunteer regularly?

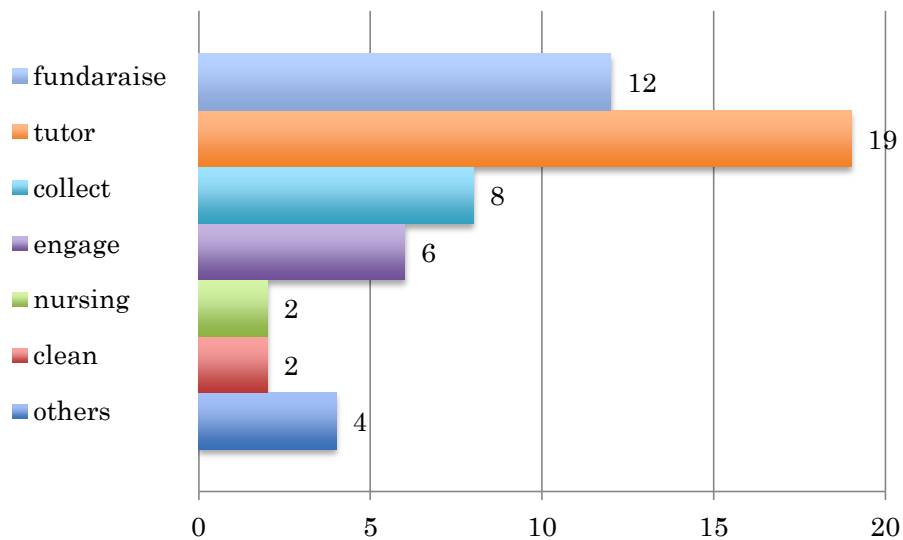


Next question is about the kinds of volunteer they do/did. As a result, in the U.S., the most frequent work is tutoring or teaching for children. In 22 students who have done volunteering, 19 students have the experience of teaching volunteer. The second frequent work is fundraising or selling items to raise money. 12 students have this experience. The result is interesting for me, perhaps most Japanese students because, In Japan, the most popular part-time job for students is tutoring. On the other hand, in Japan, the most frequent activity is cleaning, which I didn't add it in my choices, and the second one is fundraising or selling items to raise money. Also, only 4 people did

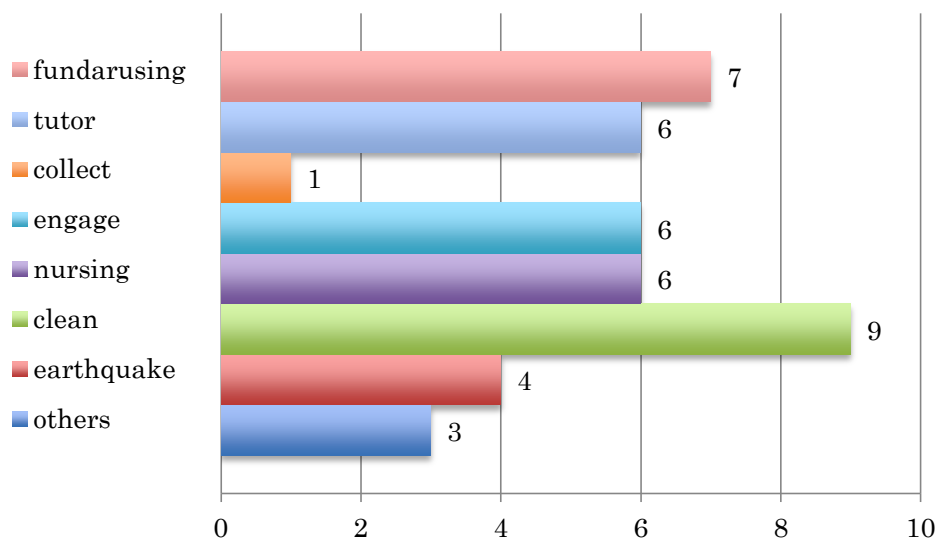
volunteer work to revive from the big earthquake. It's a surprising result for me because I expected more people work for stricken areas. In addition, while many Japanese students do only one kind of activities, most American students have two or three kinds of volunteer experiences.

What do/did you do as a volunteer?

US



JP

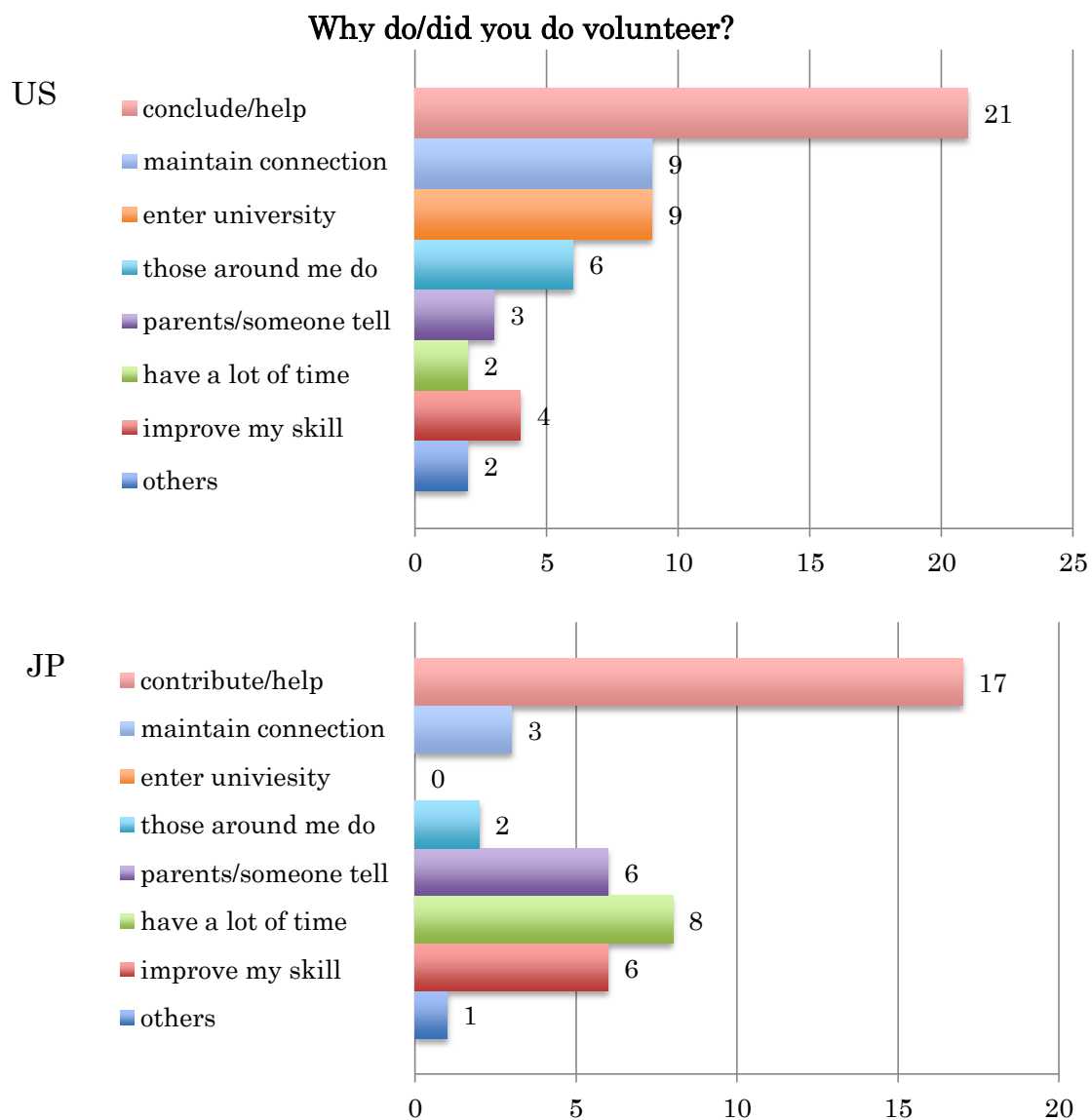


I asked them the reason why they do/did volunteer. As I expected, most people answered that it is to contribute to or help people and society in both countries.

21 American students and 17 Japanese students answered so. It is natural because it is a general idea about volunteer. However, except for this reason, there are some differences between American students and Japanese students. First, 9 American students answered one reason is to enter a university, college, or any other school, while no Japanese student answered so. It is said that many American universities require or refer to volunteer experiences when they decide new students. Also Stanford University does so. In Japan, even though some universities start to require or refer to volunteer experiences, most universities judge new students by only their entrance exam's scores.

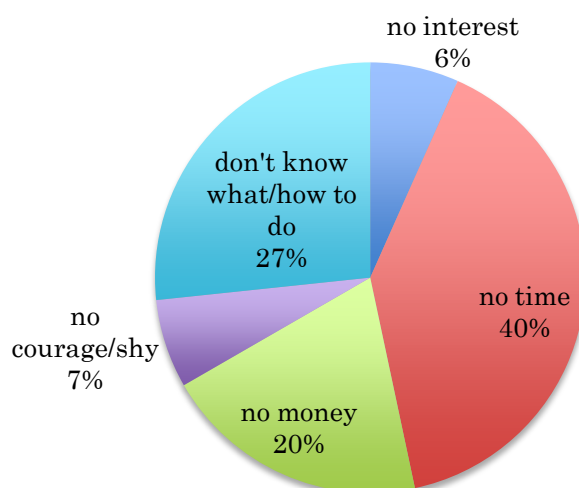
In addition, one American student answered that it is to write her volunteer experience on her resume to get a good job. It may be said that many American students do volunteer to enter a better university or to get a better job. But, from a different point of view, we can consider that it is the evidence that volunteer is a custom in the U.S.. To prove this idea, I can show you another result. While only 3 Japanese students answered that it is because people around them do volunteer activity, 6 American students

answered it as one reason. It indicates that volunteer spreads as a custom in the U.S.. On the other hand, 6 Japanese students gave a reason that their parents or someone told me to do volunteer. In fact, some Japanese people said that they have done volunteer work only through their neighborhood associations or their schools. But it doesn't become a custom yet; they thought they were forced to do so.



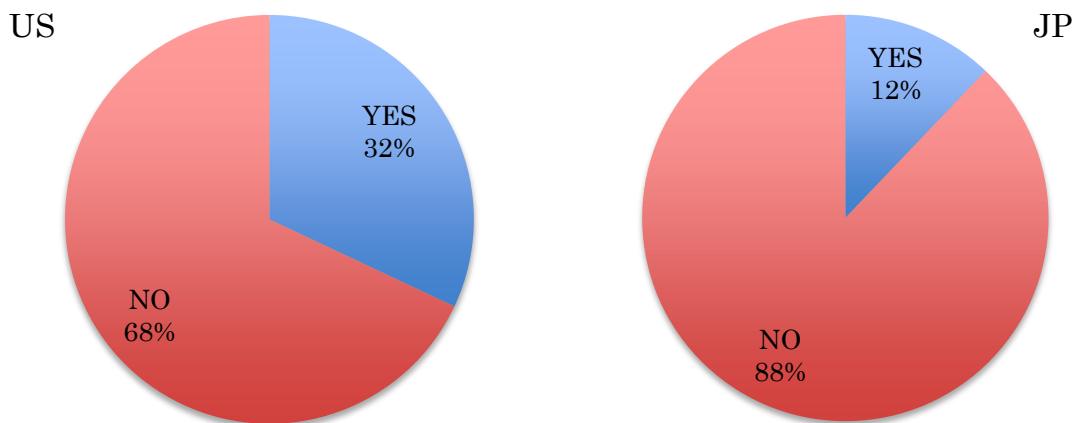
I also asked people who haven't done any volunteer work why they haven't done. 6 Japanese students answered that it is because of no time and 4 Japanese students answered that it is because they don't know what to do or how to do. It shows us that the environment that Japanese students do volunteer is not equipped. Most Japanese high school or junior high school students are busy with their club activities and preparation for the entrance exams of upper schools. Moreover, in Japan, there is fewer volunteer organizations than in the U.S.. Another question about organizations students got involved with include that many American students have gotten involved with two or more organizations. In American middle schools and universities, there are many kinds of volunteer organizations. This is the reason why most American students have several kinds of volunteer experiences.

Why haven't you done any volunteer work? (JP)



Finally, I asked about my big question, whether volunteer work is done just for self-satisfaction or not. As a result, 8 American students (32%) and 4 Japanese students (12%) answered “YES”, volunteer is done for self-satisfaction. Contrary to my expectation, more American students think volunteer of just self-satisfaction than

Do you think that volunteer is done just for self-satisfaction?



Japanese students do. The main pro opinions are that because they feel happy when they help someone else and they do only what they want to do. However, many students don't think so in both of two countries. The main con opinions are that because if they get some satisfaction from their volunteer work, they could also help someone and they could improve themselves.

In conclusion, more American students have volunteer experiences than

Japanese students. They are more likely to do several kinds of volunteer works. Moreover, about half of them have done volunteering regularly. There are two main reasons the differences. One is that American people have a custom to do volunteering. Because their families and the neighborhood often do volunteer work, they could get the custom and the volunteerism. Many schools and organizations also have various volunteer programs. The second one is that universities and companies require people who have many volunteer experiences. Of course, the main reason or purpose of volunteer is to contribute to someone and society. Even If they started to volunteer because of compulsions by parents, school or somebody else or because they wanted to enter better university or get better job, they would be likely to acquire the service spirit.

Although it is difficult to determine whether volunteer is just self-satisfaction activity or not, putting together my questionees' opinion, I conclude that volunteer is not only for self-satisfaction. Volunteer has an altruistic aspect. Through volunteer activity, we cannot only gain valuable experiences to improve ourselves but also help someone and society in need. But when we decide what to do as volunteer work, if we choose just what we want to do, not what others want us to do, the volunteer would become

self-satisfaction work. Some Japanese questionees reminded me of one Japanese motto.

It is that “playing the hypocrite is more valued than doing nothing”. Even if we feel we are playing the hypocrite, we are also certainly helping someone. In fact, I took part in two volunteer activities. One is a program for children of lower income families. The other is cleaning of the half-moon bay. The former is more fun than the latter. But, we mustn’t value volunteer from whether it is fun or not. Both of two activities are valuable and we could contribute to society. After I come back to Japan, I want to do volunteer work more positively.

Appendixes

References

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Volunteer Work of American Students

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

I'm a Stanford student from the VIA ALC2 program, and I'm working on a survey project for one of our classes. These questions are about volunteer works of American students. If you can spare a few minutes to answer these questions, we would appreciate it. THANK YOU!

I Respondent's Personal Data

Q1 Gender

☐ Male ☐ female

Q2 Age

☐ below 20 ☐ 20-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ above 31- ☐ I don't want to answer.

Q3 Year in school

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Q4 Major

II Volunteer works of American students

Q1: Have you done any volunteering?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(If Yes, go to Q2. If No, go to Q5)

Q2: Do you volunteer regularly now?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, how often?

☐ everyday ☐ once a week or more ☐ once or twice a month

☐ once several months

If No, how many times have you done volunteer work in your life?

☐ once ☐ several times ☐ 5~9 times ☐ 10 times or more

☐ I used to do volunteer work regularly.

Q3: What do/did you do as a volunteer?

- ☐ fundraise or sell items to raise money
- ☐ tutor, teach for children
- ☐ collect, make, distribute, or serve foods or goods
- ☐ engage in general labor
- ☐ nursing, care or something for retirements, elderly people
- ☐ others

if you could, please write down what you do/did.

Q4: Why do/did you do volunteer?

- ☐ to contribute to someone / to help someone or society
- ☐ to maintain social connection
- ☐ to enter a university, college, any other school
- ☐ because those around me did
- ☐ because my parents or someone told me to do
- ☐ because I had a lot of time
- ☐ to get higher social status
- ☐ to improve my skill
- ☐ others

Q5: When did you do volunteer work, did you get involve with any organizations, or did you do it by yourself?

- ☐ school or other educational school
- ☐ scouting group or other youth serving organization
- ☐ religious group
- ☐ social or community service organization
- ☐ environmental organization
- ☐ hospitals or other health organization
- ☐ by myself

☐ others

If you can, please write the name of organization you were involved with.

Q5: Do you think that volunteer work is done just for self-satisfaction?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why/Why not?

Q6: (A1 is NO only) Why haven't you done any volunteer work?

- ☐ no interest
- ☐ no time
- ☐ no money
- ☐ no courage/shy
- ☐ don't want to be thought of a hypocrite
- ☐ volunteer is just self-satisfaction
- ☐ don't know what to do or how to do
- ☐ others

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!