News of the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on March 11 was broadcast all over the world. People around the world were shocked by the terrible situation in the disaster-stricken areas. People outside Japan are offering their prayers and encouragement in various ways.

Argentina (Aikawa Tomoko)

Argentina has accepted Japanese immigrants into its society for over 100 years. Since the earthquake hit Japan, many Argentines have asked their Japanese or Japanese-Argentine friends about the safety of their family members in Japan. The Argentines expressed their love and respect for Japan and said, “The pain of the quake victims is our pain. We’d like to do something to help.”

On March 18, people concerned about Japan gathered at the Plaza de la Republica containing the Obelisk of Buenos Aires. About 1,000 people were there. Among them were children attending a Japanese-Spanish bilingual school, their parents and young students studying Japanese. After a moment of silence, the people wished for Japan’s recovery from the disaster and called out “Gambare Nippon!”
Thailand (Nakamura Sachie)

I’m a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer for JICA (the Japan International Cooperation Agency). I work at an institute for disabled children in Khon Kaen Province in the northeastern part of Thailand. The staff members at the institute and local shopkeepers ask me, “Is it all right now in Japan?” They showed concern for the quake victims and wished to help them in some way. “When the Japanese make wishes, they fold paper cranes,” I said. Then, people joined me in folding paper cranes and writing messages of support in Japanese.

Khon Kaen is far from Bangkok and very few Japanese live here. Even so, the warm people of Thailand cry for us Japanese whenever they see news of the disaster.

Ghana (Yamamoto Junichi)

As a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer, I go around to elementary schools in Ghana to teach science and mathematics. On the week following the Great East Japan Earthquake, I was invited to see a music class at one of the schools. When I arrived at the school, all the students were waiting outside under a big tree. The principal said to me, “Japan is going through a difficult time. As your friends, we want to sing a song and offer prayers.” The children started singing. Some of them looked up at the sky. Some dropped their eyes as they sang. I was so happy that I couldn’t think of the right words to say to them. Here in Ghana, far from Japan, there are friends thinking about you.