



THE SOKA TIMES

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Students Inspired by UNU Lectures

On May 9, 2017, members of the Global Leaders Program (GLP) visited United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo. UNU is a graduate school that was built in 1975 for the purpose of contributing to the realization of world peace. It has a massive research network connected with 13 research laboratories all over the world. The network transfers necessary information, such as data only available at UNU, to other institutes. UNU has contributed to solving various global issues that are of great importance to the United Nations.

GLP members listened to two presentations mainly on the topic of general information about and the system of the United Nations, as well as possible solutions to complex current global issues.

The first presentation was given by Natsuko Imai, a member of the UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of



MASAYOSHI ISHINO

GLP students in front of UNU

Sustainability. She explained the system of human security, offering the conclusion that in order to maintain the security of human beings, reliance on protection provided by nations is sufficient, but each of us as individuals also must strengthen our own ability to protect ourselves in the future.

Kiyoshi Chiba, who works at

the United Nations Information Center, gave the second presentation, which focused on current global issues and how to deal with them. He pointed out that the fundamental role of the UN is to unite member states to solve global issues as one. The UN's activities are based on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted in

September 2015.

Following the lectures, one of the GLP members commented, "We should understand the spirit of the basis of SDGs and the UN Charter. What we can do is become interested in global issues more as individual problems."

By Naoki Kato and Yukari Hashimoto

For Sustainable Living with Tamagawa Aqueduct

Four members of the Global Leaders Program (GLP) interviewed Toshihiro Suzuki, the chairperson of the Manabiya Edo-Tokyo UNESCO CLUB. The main topic was the preservation of the scenery and ecosystem of Tamagawa Aqueduct in a favorable condition. Tamagawa Aqueduct, or Tamagawa Josui in Japanese, is an irrigation canal that flows from the west to the east of Tokyo.

In the interview, Suzuki introduced the important aspect of protecting the natural environment, which involves understanding the history of Tamagawa Aqueduct in a new light; to visit the site and perceive

the reality. He also expressed an idea to show appreciation and deference to farmers in the past who made great efforts to preserve the Tamagawa Aqueduct. Moreover, he claims that the key to protecting the natural diversity of the forests is our own consciousness and how we act as citizens. We can convey our ideas by proposing plans and requests to city councils, which can then be communicated to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, enabling citizens and administrative bodies to work together. As for us, it is necessary to recognize that our present lives are based on the benefit of limited water resources. "Thinking

about future waterways and environmental conservation in 50 years is essential to maintain the beautiful natural environment and our daily lives," Suzuki emphasized.

In the interview, Suzuki also touched on the Environmental Development Summit in South Africa, highlighting the importance of preserving the natural environment in an era of worldwide recognition of the need to protect it. In the summit, a proposal to tackle and overcome environmental issues was made. It comprised three main parts: to know the present situation of world environmental problems; to reflect on our

lifestyles with a sustainable future in mind; and to seek concrete actions for solutions. Suzuki conveyed his idea by referring to the international proposal that we try our best to protect our local surroundings, as each of us is responsible for sustaining our mother earth as individuals from a more local viewpoint. He finished by saying, "By caring for the environment around us based on this proposal, we can contribute to creating a sustainable community, starting with modest progress."

By Takaaki Yasue, Ryota Kawasaki, Chiharu Nagai and Mayumi Kurata

Peacebuilding Requires Compromise, Says U.S. Prof.

Soka Senior High School students attended a lecture on peacebuilding in polarized cities where ethnic groups are divided by religion, language, and/or culture, by Professor Scott A. Bollens, a professor at the University of California, Irvine. He specializes in urban planning and public policies. The students learned about the historical backgrounds of the ethnic conflict and management as a path to peace in cases such as Syria, Sarajevo, Lebanon, Ireland, Cyprus and Jerusalem. Unlike other scholars, who tend to stick with scientific and objective points of view, Bollens' approach is based more on a personal and subjective view. His lecture for GLP students thus consisted mainly of describing his interactions with the local people that

he had met. As Professor Bollens stated, the cause of conflict is inequity based on differences in region, custom, and/or ethnicity. Concluding his talk, he emphasized that peace cannot mean victory for one side, and that peace is all about compromise in reconciliation for both sides. After the lecture, some students asked him questions about his vision of peacebuilding. The following interview may help to understand his perspective.

Q: How can people who are hostile to each other build a fair relationship in divided cities?

A: It could be created through attempts to understand and accept others because this becomes an incentive to compromise with one another. Efforts should be carried out wherever people of varying identities are gathered. In policymaking, for example,



HARAGUCHI EIKO TIFFANY

Prof. Scott A. Bollens delivers a lecture to California fieldwork members.

politicians should make sure to consider the benefit for everyone.

Q: What can we do now to prevent conflict in the future?

A: Education plays a significant role in preventing conflict. Children need to know the history of not only their own identity, but also that of the identity of others, and

respect differences and dispel stereotypes through interacting with other students. Fostering a new generation without prejudice is important to create a peaceful and sustainable society for our future.

By Sachi Nishida, Ryohei Ishimura, Daichi Takagi and Noriko Ogita

Tokyo and Okinawa Students Interact for Peace

Global Leaders Program (GLP) members from Tokyo and from Nahakokusai Senior High School in Okinawa, known as Nahakoku, shared their opinions on the theme of poverty and environmental problems with regard to coral reefs in Okinawa. The meeting was held at the Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum as a second Peace Forum following that of the previous year. The Peace Forum is aimed at deepening ideas of world peace and promoting friendship through discussion and presentations of each school's research. The students also talked about the differences in peace education between each school and Nahakoku students professed their frank ideas on what it is like to live in a prefecture that hosts U.S. military bases. They said that the noise from the base can be loud in the classroom, but at the same time they think it cannot be helped because there



TAEMI ISHIGURO

Tokyo and Okinawa students visit Okinawa Peace Memorial Park.

are people who benefit from the base. Surprisingly, they seemed not to view the base as a serious problem.

After this, GLP members and Nahakoku students visited Peace Memorial Park in Okinawa. The first stop was Heiwa no Ishiji, a memorial monument that bears the names of 240,000 people who died in the war, regardless of their nationality. The students then visited Himeyuri Peace

Museum, which features the history of schoolgirls mobilized for the war, referred to as Himeyuri Gakutotai.

A common wish to seek peace together was expressed in the conversation between Soka and Nahakoku students. However, there were differences in views and ideas.

GLP members from Soka shared their own ideas from a global perspective. However, they

had a basic understanding of how world peace might be achieved. In contrast, Nahakoku students have a more acute perspective and a deeper understanding of local peace particular to Okinawa and Japan. One of the Nahakoku students expressed her feeling that Okinawa is in a time of peace right now, considering the past Okinawa ground combat, and was optimistic and confident about peace in Japan.

At the end of the day, one of the GLP members said, "I keenly realized how cruel and tragic the Okinawa ground combat was and learned that there were differences in perspectives on peace." He expressed his desire to put greater effort into making his surroundings and the world a better place through discussion with Nahakoku students and learning about the history of war.

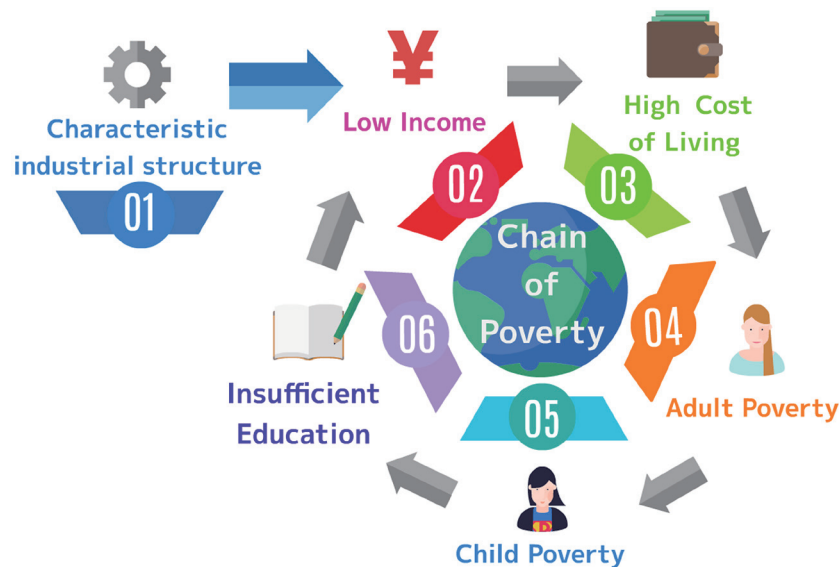
By Natsuha Kataoka, Masayo Nakama, Mayumi Kurata, Takaaki Yasue and Daiki Oishi

Poverty in Okinawa Affects 30% of Children

Child poverty is measured as the percentage of children in households with incomes below 50 percent of the national median income (relative poverty) based on the government's basic survey of people's living conditions.

An Okinawa newspaper introduced a concrete example of people who are in poverty. In some areas, the prefecture has no train service, and thus travel by bus to a school far away for a certain high school girl costs about 40,000 yen a month. The girl pays half with her part-time salary and her mother pays the other half. If she could buy a commuter pass, she would be able to get a discount. However, it's difficult for her to acquire enough sum of money to do this.

UNICEF's Innocenti Report Card 13, a report by the organization's Innocenti Research Institute that compares and analyzes the situation of children in developed countries shows that the poverty rate of Japanese children is 15.8 percent, the 14th highest among 41 high-income countries. In Japan, Okinawa Prefecture has the highest poverty



The chain of poverty in Okinawa.

rate, at 29.9 percent. This means that one-third of children in the prefecture live in relative poverty. A prefectural investigation shows that Okinawa also has the highest rate of people who do not decide on their career path after secondary school or high school. Among adults, Okinawa has the highest rate of unemployment and divorce in Japan.

One of the major factors behind the increase in the poverty rate in Okinawa is its industrial structure. The situation with respect to industries in Okinawa is unbalanced. The prefecture's tertiary industries,

such as tourism and IT, account for 80% of the industries. The reason is that manufacturing in Okinawa is costly, owing to transportation costs, as it is about 1,600 kilometers from Tokyo. This situation also makes it difficult for secondary industries such as manufacturing. However, unless secondary industries are developed, people will lose stable employment opportunities. Also, revenues tend to flow out of Okinawa easily, as there are few company headquarters in the prefecture. Satoru Shimamura, a professor of Okinawa University, suggested that "Promoting

processing trade would serve as a solution to poverty."

Processing trade is a trade whereby certain material and semifinished products are imported, processed and exported with added value. In Okinawa Prefecture, processing trade involves enhancing value by exporting products with added value for clothing items particular to Okinawa Prefecture and exporting chrysanthemums that were rapidly grown using electric power. Processing trade can also take advantage of the fact that Okinawa Prefecture is closer to Asian countries, such as Taiwan, than Honshu. Furthermore, this makes it possible to create considerable employment opportunities in the prefecture, contributing to solving poverty. In such a manner, a negative situation can be turned into a positive one.

GLP members conducted their research on child poverty rate issues in Okinawa, which was a strong connection with SDG's 2030 agenda designated by the United Nations.

By Natsuha Kataoka, Masayo Nakama, Kiyoshi Morita and Daiki Oishi

Experience is the First Step to Solving Global Issues

GLP members advocate that experience is invaluable. They annually conduct fieldworks as one of GLP's activities in Okinawa and California in the United States. Through two fieldwork sessions on different themes, they came to realize how important experience is.

Keiichi Inamine, former governor of Okinawa Prefecture, gave a presentation during the fieldwork in Okinawa. He shared his opinion that the importance of experience is overlooked these days in Japan. He offered the episode of Keizo Obuchi, the former prime minister of Japan, as an example. Obuchi was the first politician to grasp fully the situation of Okinawa being

governed by the U.S. Obuchi had experienced gathering the remains of people who died in the Okinawa War, and has strong faith in building peace with people in Okinawa. He therefore implemented policies reflecting the demands of people in Okinawa and succeeded in building a good relationship between Okinawa and the government.

Scott A. Bollens, a professor of Urban Planning and Public Policy, gave the GLP members a lecture during the fieldwork in California. He talked about polarized cities and religious and ethnic differences. He did his research in those cities by actually visiting them, meeting and interviewing more than

300 political leaders and urban planners, and communicating with residents. One of the cities he did his research in was Soweto in Johannesburg, South Africa, an area where black people had been forced to live under apartheid. When he visited, he was welcomed warmly by the black people living there, even though he was a white person. He would not have realized their kindness without this experience.

Before engaging in the fieldwork, the GLP members had been learning in passive way by doing research using the Internet or books. However, they realized that the fieldwork made them more active and think more deeply. Experiences enable

you to think about problems actively and change an attitude of passive learning into an engaged one. This is why they think that experience is the first step to solving global issues.

By Noriko Ogita, Daichi Takagi, Kiyoshi Morita, Ryota Kawasaki, Sachi Nishida and Chiharu Nagai

NOTICE TO READERS

The Soka Gakuen Times was created by 16 members of the Global Leaders Program (GLP) of Soka Senior High School in Kodaira, Tokyo, Japan. Through the publication, the members share the results of their research on global issues.

Survey

Taking Stock of Green Thinking

GLP members conducted a survey on environmental consciousness as a part of GLP fieldwork research. This survey covered 105 students from Soka High School in Tokyo, 75 students from Nahakokusai Senior High School in Okinawa and 88 students from the University of California, Irvine from August to September 2017. The reason they conducted this survey, the respondents of which live in the areas concerned, is that they wanted to know the differences in attitudes by area. The survey shows that although students in Tokyo are conscious of the environment, they are not taking action.



HARAGUCHI EIKO TIFFANY

GLP members conduct a survey at the University of California, Irvine.

Responses to the question, “Do you think global warming is an important issue?” (Chart 1) shows that nearly all students in Tokyo, Okinawa and California think global warming is an important issue. More than

90% of students from Okinawa and California, and all students from Tokyo, answered “The global warming issue is very or somewhat important.”

Next, in response to the

question, “If a vehicle's engine was idling, would you feel bad?” (Chart 2), more than 70% of students in California said they would. The percentage of students in Tokyo and Okinawa who answered “I would feel bad.” was 64% and 58%, respectively. In addition, responses to the questions, “Which do you want to use, costly natural energy generation or inexpensive thermal power generation?” (Chart 3) show that more than half of the students from all areas want to use natural energy. As natural energy does not discharge carbon dioxide, it is eco-friendly. The environmental consciousness of the students was thus around the same level.

go shopping, do you try to avoid using plastic bags?” (Chart 4), the number of students who use plastic bags when shopping stood out. About 80% of students from California and Okinawa try to avoid using plastic bags, but the percentage among Tokyo students was much lower, at 60%.

Based on the survey, students from Tokyo, Okinawa and California can thus be said to have the same level of environmental consciousness. However, according to Chart 4, students from Tokyo are less likely to put their consciousness into action.

By Masahiro Shiono and Risa Torigai

Chart 1. Do you think global warming is an important issue?

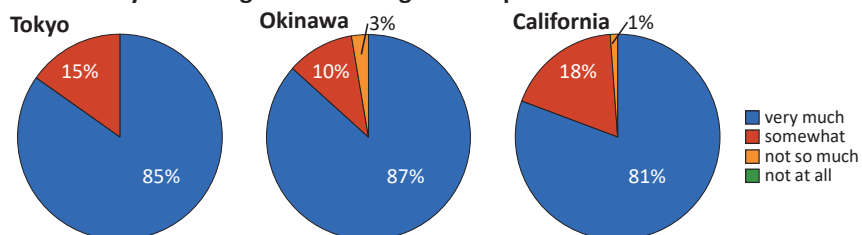


Chart 2. If a vehicle's engine was idling, would you feel bad?

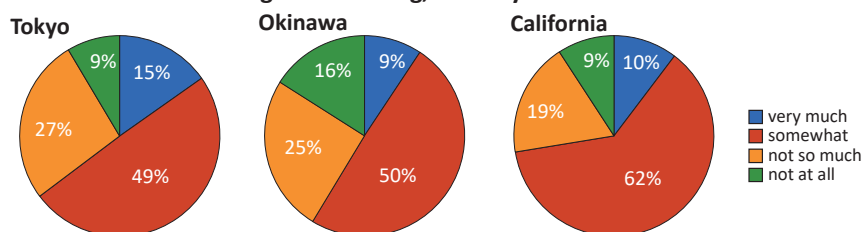


Chart 3. Which do you want to use, costly natural energy generation or inexpensive thermal power generation?

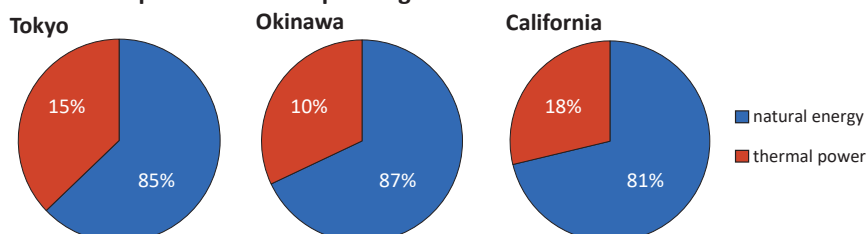
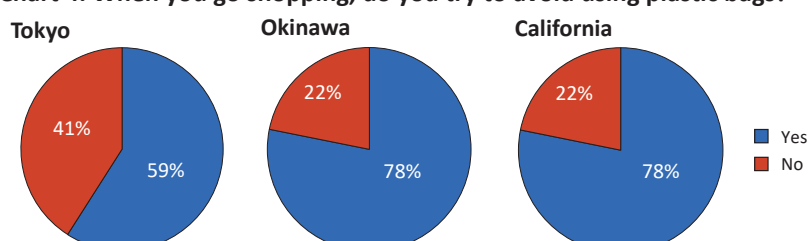


Chart 4. When you go shopping, do you try to avoid using plastic bags?



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