



Sapporo Sacred Heart School

SGH (Super Global High school)

UN Study Tour in New York

February 9th ~ 15th 2015



In front of the UN Headquarters

Introduction

In Sapporo Sacred Heart, students are encouraged to study about world issues such as poverty, and think about how we can take action in our own lives. We have been sponsoring education for Filipino children, debated about global issues, trying to take action to help those in need through bake sales and fund raising.

Since 2007 Sapporo Sacred Heart started to educate students about the UN Millennium Development Goals, and we started to send representatives to UN Global Classroom. Before then, we were given simulation exercises to inspire understanding of the lives of refugees, how UN food programs work, and encourage us to learn about the creation of cooperative societies.

In 2014, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology appointed Sapporo Sacred Heart as one of 56 Super Global High schools in Japan. Our theme is *Active Dialogue* as our education is based on the practices of co-existence, living in harmony, reaching new horizons through dialogue, reflecting on our realities, and creating a future together.

As a part of the SGH program, ten of us, all high school first graders(10th graders), went to New York in February 2015 to have a dialogue at the United Nations, and at our sister school there. Sister Cecile Meijer, who is the Society of the Sacred Heart's NGO representative at the United Nations, helped Sister Yasuko Taguchi to organize the trip.

Also Sister Gwen Hoeffel who had been in Japan for many years, chaperoned us with our two teachers (Sr. Taguchi and Ms. Akiko Ichikawa) while we stayed in New York. Prior to our study tour, we chose to focus our learning on refugees and immigrants, and the lives they lead. In the future, Japan will need to be a home for many immigrants too. So we hoped to learn a lot about how these different people with different cultures, religions and backgrounds all manage to live together in a melting pot. Here we would like to share our final experiences and thoughts with you with gratitude for all who helped and supported us, welcomed and guided us. In this booklet, you will find:

1. Our Itinerary (February 9th to 15th)
2. Our Questions
3. Our Reflections
4. The Letters to New York (A collection of our letters to Sr. Meijer, prior to our trip)

* There is an article "**Study Tour by Sacred Heart Students from Japan**" on the website of the UN-NGO "Society of the Sacred Heart at the UN" Youth section: <www.sacredheartattheun.org> Please visit the site as well.

Thank you!

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Ayaka Muranaka, Maiko Yoshida*

Itinerary of our UN Tour February 9th ~15th

Day1 (February 9th)

We met at New Chitose Airport at 12:30 and said goodbye to our parents, our teachers and the travel agent. After a brief stopover in Narita Airport, we took off for Newark Airport in New York. It took nearly 20 hours to get to New York, so we were very tired. We landed at 16:50 US time. On the way to the hotel, we saw a beautiful view of New York City. There were tall buildings and many lights. All of us were amazed – we were finally here! We arrived at Comfort Inn Long Island at 19:00 and met Sr. Gwen Hoeffel, who was our chaperone and who spoke beautiful Japanese. She gave us a warm welcome, and we felt at home with her.

Day 2 (February 10th) AM Getting up at 6.00 am, we left the hotel at 7.00 to get to the UN by subway. It was so crowded in the subway. It took more than 1 hour from door to door, including a 10 to 15 minute walk.

With Sister Gwen Hoeffel



Sister Cecile Meijer



At the Church Center



Mr. Felipe Queipo



When we got there, Sr. Cecile Meijer, who is the UN representative of the Society of the Sacred Heart at the United Nations, welcomed us at the Church Center, and showed us around and gave us an orientation. The Society of the Sacred Heart is associated with the UN Department of Public Information (DPI), and has also consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN.

Then we went to the DPI (Department of Public Information) Resource Center, and Mr.

Felipe Queipo explained about the UN, and we had a question-and-answer session.

Next, two Japanese UN staff members talked to us and we learned about their work. At the end, we sang “Flowers will Bloom”, and explained that it was written to support the survivors of the disaster that hit Japan on March 11, 2011.

PM At the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, Mr. Noboru Sekiguchi (the Japanese Minister of Economics at the mission) gave us a lecture about Japanese diplomacy. We also learned about the MDGs and Post 2015 agenda during a Q&A session with him. Lastly we sang “Flowers will Bloom”. There is an article on our visit on their website: <http://www.un.emb-japan.go.jp/events/2015/021015.html>

Then we went back to Church Center where we met Sr. Meijer who took us to a chapel. There were various religious symbols there, including one for Shinto. We saw that the UN respects various religious values.

With Minister Sekiguchi



At the UN Courtyard



Day 3 (February 11th) AM We visited our Sister school, the Convent of the Sacred Heart, arriving there at 7.30 am. Dr. Joseph Ciancaglini, the Head of School and the teachers and our host sisters welcomed us warmly. Mr. Michael Chung, the Director of Community Outreach, and Ms. Amanda Codina, the Dean of Students, took care of us. After a lovely breakfast, they took us and our host sisters, together with our teachers and Sister Hoefel to visit Cassidy’s Place, the child care center in the community of East Harlem by subway to perform voluntary service with children. We got to know our host sisters while working together there.

Mr. Chung and Ms. Codina



Voluntary Service



The experience was a happy one, and yet it made us think about those children and their families.

PM After we went back to The Convent of the Sacred Heart 91st Street, we attended classes with our host sisters. There were some differences between Japanese schools and American schools. For example, they use power-point presentations and all the students use tablets in class. After that, our host sisters showed us around the school. We were welcomed in a high school assembly that had been prepared for us. At the end of it, we sang “Flowers will Bloom”. Many students said to us, “your song was great!” We were glad to hear that. Even if the language we use is different, we can communicate through music. Ms. Mary Boulton- Haling and the art class gave each of us a lovely oak leaf-shaped (a reminder of St. Philippine Duchesne) pendant which they made. She told us all the students wear the pendants during Lent to be united in prayer and Lenten practices.

With Mr. Ciancaglini and the host sisters



Ms. Mary Boulton-Haling, showing a work of art with St. Madeleine Sophie and others on the bus!



Homestay

After school, we went home with our host families who welcomed us so warmly. Each of us had a great experience with our host families. We are so grateful! Here is Ayaka’s report: My host sister took me to St. Patrick’s Cathedral. It was the most beautiful church I have ever visited. I was touched by the serenity. Sister Taguchi told me that Irish immigrants who did not own much in the middle of the 19th century worked hard to donate money to build this magnificent Cathedral. They needed this sacred space in their hard lives to pray to God. I learned about the true richness of prayer through this experience. Thanks to the kindness of my host family, I could enjoy my homestay. I showed them how to make an origami crane. My host family was so pleased, that I

became very happy. I will never forget their kindness and what I have experienced.

Day 4 (February 12th) AM

When it was the time to say “good-bye,” we were filled with gratitude for the teachers and staff, students and the host families for such a heart-warming welcome and hospitality. Sr. Taguchi said, “This is what it means to be a member of the Sacred Heart family. What a blessed experience!” and Ms. Ichikawa said, “When we accept guests from abroad, let’s do the same and expand the welcome we experienced here.”

After thanking Dr. Ciancaglini, who gave us lovely school souvenirs and gifts, Mr. Chung, Ms. Codina, and host sisters, we went back to the Church Center with Sr. Hoeffel and our teachers.

Sr. Meijer was waiting for us with Ms. Els Jellema, who was from the UNHCR. She held a question-and-answer session with us. We asked questions about educational support for young refugees. She told us that in Sudan, where she had been stationed, there are still 80000 refugees living in tents for 40 years, and that shocked us.

After that, we participated in a weekly briefing of the DPI and heard a discussion with the theme “Transitioning from the MDGs”. We then sang “Flowers Will Bloom” at the kind arrangement of Mr. Jeffrey Brez, Chief of NGO Relations and Advocacy at UNDP.

With Ms. Jellema who told us about Sudanese refugees



With Mr. Brez

Singing “Flowers Will Bloom” at the DPI meeting



PM We had lunch at the UN Cafeteria and went to the Meditation Room planned by Dag Hammarskjöld for a quiet time of reflection. It was so refreshing. Then we joined

guided tour of UN. Later, we shared our reflections at the church center. Back at the hotel, we skyped with our classmates back in Sapporo. It was fun and also empowering.

Day 5 (February 13th) We went to the Migrant Museum on Ellis Island and we saw the Statue of Liberty. The closer we got to Liberty Island, the bigger the Statue of Liberty became. Approaching it by ferry, we had the same view of it as many immigrants coming to America for the first time, had.

When we were on Liberty Island, we saw an airplane. It was carrying a banner saying `Blacks Lives Matter`. People are born equal. We need to work together to create a society where inequality doesn't exist.

In the evening we came back to the city to have supper and wrap up. When we arrived at the restaurant and began to write down our reflections, we thought about what we wanted to tell our classmates when we got back to Japan. We also wrote down the things we wanted to remember from the trip. We learned that respecting others with different opinions and different values is important. We are the future generation of leaders so it is important for us to take an interest in global issues. This being our last night, we thanked Sr. Cecile Meijer, who planned everything and Sr. Gwen Hoeffel, who chaperoned us every day, and then we celebrated Sr. Meijer's birthday.

At Ellis Island



"Thank you, Sisters!"



Day 6 ~ 7 (February 14~15th)

After saying good-bye to Sr. Gwen Hoeffel who had been so kind, we left for the airport in the early morning. We arrived at Narita in the afternoon. Since we had some time in transit, we had a reflection time for 2 hours in the waiting room, then we shared our reflections, while waiting for the flight to Chitose. We were filled with gratitude. We arrived at Chitose late at night, exhausted, yet full of life. It was such a blessed trip, thanks to Sr. Meijer, Sr. Hoeffel, and all who helped us.



Questions we prepared and posed:

- NO.1 Which state or city has the most immigrants, and which has the most emigrants? Why do you think these cities or states attract immigrants/emigrants?**
- NO.2 What policies are being carried out for immigration in the USA? Are they different from state to state?**
- NO.3 How can the problem of illegal immigration be solved so that there is better protection for immigrants?**
- NO.4 Is Japan an attractive destination for immigrants? If so, why?
(This question was for Minister Sekiguchi and the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations)**

ANSWER from Mr. Sekiguchi:

Because there are many things in Japan that immigrants can't get in their own countries, such as jobs, and safe cities..

Also Japanese society is safe and people don't suffer religious or Political persecution.

- NO.5 What are the positives and negatives of having many immigrants? What difficulties are faced by immigrants who cannot speak English?**

ANSWER from Mr. Sekiguchi:

Nobody can predict the effects of having immigrants.

An example of a negative side effect of immigration is that it can have an effect on security.

- NO.6 1) Many people from various countries work together at the UN. It must be so interesting to work with such people. Do you have any experiences when you felt the differences between cultures?**

ANSWER from the UN staff member

There are so many differences of cultures that words cannot describe. For example, something as simple as greetings, there is bowing, hugging, kissing and shaking hands. So we have to accept people of all cultures and backgrounds and

respect their cultures. The UN is a place that we can accept, respect, and forgive one another. That is the best way to stop wars.

2) Why are there so few Japanese people working in the UN?

ANSWER from Minister Sekiguchi (Japanese Mission)

Because Japanese have difficulty with English, that's the main reason. A lot of Japanese people don't speak up so they are not good self-assertion, even if they can speak English, there are few people who aim to work in the specialized field of international relations. And most of Japanese people are modest so they are not good at self-assertion. Even if they can speak English, there are few people who have the specialized field.

NO7. Q. Why did you decide to be a member of the UN? And do you have anything that has made you proud to be working here?

Mr. Felipe Queipo (UNDPI)

Because after studying theology, I became interested in changing the world through politics. I also thought that the UN was for the people like monasteries and convents were for God and I wanted to find a light in the darkness.

I think that my work is the most beautiful work in the world.

Ms. Els Jellema (UNHCR)

Because there were refugees around me in when I was young in my homeland (Holand) and my mother had always been helping them and I came to know their hardship and wanted to help them.

No.8 Q. Is there any way to stop religious conflict?

Mr. Felipe Queipo (UNDPI)

A lot of religious conflicts happen because of lack of communication and people's pride.

Mr.Felipe, Mr.Sekiguchi

It's important respect peoples' beliefs and don't press your opinions on others. Being open mind is important.

No.9 When a war torn country is so dangerous that you can't deliver emergency supplies, what kind of measures would you take?

No.10 How do you decide the amount of emergency supplies and funds for each country?

No.11 Has the United Nations ever been successful in stopping a conflict?

Mr. Felipe Queipo (UNDPI) told us: “There has been success in stopping conflicts. But people don’t know whether or not the UN has succeeded. The media usually reports negative points about unsolved problems as well as world current affairs.” We need to work on our media literacy. .

Right now, the UN is involved in negotiations between Palestine and Israel and other disputes. Even if the UN knows there are some problems, they can’t take action in countries without the requests from the government. They couldn’t perform a rescue operation when the earthquake happened in Haiti.

No.12 The MDGs have to be accomplished by 2015. Why are so many of MDGs so behind schedule?

What can Japan do to help with the MDGs?

- There were not enough funds.
- (About education) There is a teacher shortage, and also those children in poverty have to work instead of going to school. So they can’t get an education.
- Combined reason by war and conflict.

No.13 What is the top priority of the UN right now ?

- Conflicts and Wars: We should stop conflicts from occurring, keep conflicts from escalating and prevent war from occurring
Women’s active participation: promote opportunities for women to be more involved in society
Policies for young people to have dreams: We have to carry out policies to inspire young people to dream more. (Japan)
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Our Reflections from the UN Tour

We visited America, which is often called “a melting pot” or “salad bowl”. I felt Japan can learn about co-existing with others from the US. When we were in the subway in New York, we could hear many kinds of languages. When we had voluntary service at a nursery school, we could see that children who were from different environments played together happily. I think these things attract Japanese people because we are trying to learn how to co-exist with those different from us. In the US, we could see many examples of co-existence in daily life.

I learned a lot, and then I thought a lot. When I visited famous sites such as the Statue of Liberty, of course I was excited to see it, but I couldn't help thinking about what emigrants had thought when they had finally arrived there. When we passed through Times Square, I recalled a scene from my favorite movie, but I couldn't help also thinking about how it looks through the eyes of a homeless person. We should see not only noticeable points, but also look for deeper understanding. We also visited UN and I understood deeply that the UN was truly the place for global peace. Sr. Meijer said to me “It is really nice that there are many people from a lot of different countries, isn't it?” I really thought so. I loved it so much.

What I wanted to tell my classmates about was the necessity of transforming the world ourselves. At every place we visited in the UN, I heard the same things – that taking action is important for us, even if our actions are very small. When we see problems around us, we have to take an interest in them and be eager to solve them. We cannot leave others to solve issues alone, without taking action ourselves.

In my opinion, the first step to make this world better is to focus on understanding and respect. We shouldn't allow religion, gender or race to become a wall between people. All people are born equal. Our different cultures should be instruments to understand and respect one another, not instruments to hurt one another.

Lastly, I will talk about my image of Global Leaders. For me, Global Leaders are the people who never stop asking or seeking for peace. The people who I met at the UN were really eager to solve the difficult issues around the world and were trying to provide people with better lives. They were thinking in earnest. Now we need to think as they do. Because we might be the ones to make a new world.

Hina Kohko

We thought of some questions to ask people at the UN.
One of them was: Has the United Nations ever been successful in stopping a conflict ?

We asked Mr. Felipe at the Department of Public Information. When the answer was “Yes,” I was surprised. Media often shows bad news so I thought the answer would be “No.” The media often only shows the negative side of news about the UN, so we are made to think that not much is achieved. So I think we should work on our media literacy. I think that a free and fair media is the most important thing for our future .

Ayaka Muranaka

What impressed me most is when I went to a day-care center ,there were children from underprivileged homes, when I got home I told my host mother about them because they study in the bathtub since they don't have enough space.

The DPI speaker at the UN told us that as the SDGs take the place of the MDGs, we as the youth have to give our opinions and change the world. I won't forget the importance of communicating and sharing what I think. I should not be silent.

Maho Kukita

I was impressed with what Mr.Felipe at UNDPI told us. He said, “If you fight with someone from the same culture, often one of you is to blame. But if you fight with someone from a different culture, you can't say one side is more to blame. Both sides are to blame. If one side forces another to accept one's opinion or culture, this lacks understanding about different cultures. We need to accept other points of view.” When I heard this, I thought how difficult it is to understand and accept others. We have different cultures, languages and backgrounds. So, in this age of globalization we need to cultivate our tolerance to overcome the difference of cultures, backgrounds and religions. Also we need to cultivate our ability to communicate our thoughts and opinions.

Maiko Yoshida

We have heard a lot of people talking during the trip. What they have in common is they are all seeking for peace. I began to understand that the policy of the United Nations is to achieve action through discussion and dialogue. There are different cultures and religions in the world, so it is very difficult, but as long as everyone's purpose is peace, it isn't impossible, I think. It will take a lot of time, but to have discussion that leads to dialogue and mutual understanding is the most valuable way to solve problems. I could feel my growth after one week in New York. Our trip is not over. We are going to continue sharing what we have learned with our classmates. By sharing, thinking and taking action, we can show our gratitude to everyone who made this trip possible, and all those who welcomed us.

Mamika Makino

What impressed me most in New York City is when I spent a night with my host family. I think they originally came from Africa, and there was a Cameroonian flag in my room. I realized that in Japan, if there are two different things, we always try to put them together. But in America, if there are two different things, they always try to accept and respect each other. I think that's the biggest difference between Japan and America and also it is the first step to living together in this world.

Shion Okuyama

When we visited the Statue of Liberty, I looked up from the pedestal and saw an airplane with a banner that said "Black Lives Matter." Everyone's life is important. All the people are born equal. As people, we should respect each other's lives. The Minister at the Japan Mission and a UN staff member said the same thing: we have to understand and accept each other's differences. This includes religious and racial differences as well as small differences in our daily lives. If we can do that, we can realize symbiosis or coexistence.

Yuri Suzuki

I want to tell my classmates that we should respect others as they are. Even though we have different opinions or different values we should make an effort to accept the differences. I think it is difficult for Japanese people so we have to make an effort.

What I remember most about this trip is that we have to act as leaders for the SDGs. The MDGs were created by each nation's leaders and decision makers, but in order to have the SDGs go forward, we have to increase our awareness of unachieved goals and new challenges. We have to know more about what is going on in the world now and we have to take action.

Mio Sugimoto

We visited the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and Minister Sekiguchi explained to us about Japanese UN-centered diplomacy, the Millennium Development Goals, the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. We learned how the UN contributes to keep world peace and security, the realization of economic development and respect for human rights. His speech made me realize how the UN works for peace which I had taken for granted.

Also we learned how Japan can contribute to the UN through dialogue and cooperation. In today's globalized world, we need to think about how to accept those different from us, by trying to understand each other, to have win-win relationships. Also we need to think critically when we get information. We were grateful for this precious chance to learn from the Minister of Economics at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations.

Yukari Sajiki

We saw a lot of people, listened to many lectures, learned a lot of things in only four days. It was a precious experience and a treasure for me. I'm grateful to all the people I've met on this trip.

I would like to talk about the best point, the point that moved me. In the lecture by Mr. Felipe at the UN DPI, when I asked a question about the UN, he said that there are a lot of people who have different cultures, different religions and different languages in the UN. And he said that it is important to accept people as they are. At the UN people from different countries work together, it's a real co-existence among different cultures.

So I want to become a person who can understand, and accept people, even if I don't like them. In the future I want to help people around the world. We got seeds in NY. I want to plant and grow flowers in Japan with the help of the school and my classmates. Also, I want to make a flower garden all over the world.

What we can do (Taking Action)

After coming back to Japan, I thought about what I could do for the world. "What is a global leader?" our teacher asked us at the end of our trip. My answer is: a person who can have conversations with anybody, can talk not only in English but also other languages. A global leader is someone who can greet everyone and convey both gratitude and apology, can allow the people around them to freely be themselves. A person who has a strong personal identity and manages their own health, time and opinions, but who also looks at the bigger picture and tries to help the people around them is a true leader.

I think the most important thing is to start somewhere and take action. I have 4 ideas.

1. Telling people about both the SDGs and the MDGs.

The MDGs haven't been achieved yet because there are a lot of people who don't know what they can do. I learned we need to cooperate with the government, the UN and all citizens to achieve our SDGs.

2. Sending money collected on our monthly Umeboshi-bento Day to NGOs.

We have a special day once a month where we eat a simple lunch of rice and pickled

plums, and we donate our lunch money to help people in need. If we send our donations to the UN, we can help more t people in need.

Also, if we have the opportunity to visit the UN in the future, how about bringing donations to the UN every year? How about setting up collection boxes in our school with information about the MDGs? If students know more about these goals, maybe they will donate more.

2. Sending stationery to UNICEF.

We saw boxes of stationery prepared by UNICEF for children around the world. I think it is not enough and they need more. If we begin a campaign to contribute stationery to UNICEF, they can help many more children

If we recycle used paper and make them into notebooks for us to use, then buy new notebooks for those who need them, we can help children who want to study.

Mai Kanazawa

I remember a poignant moment when we were in the Dag Hammerskjold Meditation Room in the UN, reflecting on his words - "All that has been: Thanks. All that shall be: Yes." After receiving so many blessings during this trip, this is all I can say.

Yasuko Taguchi rscj (teacher)

As for me, as one teacher, I declare that I should educate students about the SDGs in my English class and make an effort to let as many students know about them as possible.

Akiko Ichikawa (teacher)

The Letters to New York (October to December 2014)

This is a collection of our letters written to Sister Cecile Meijer prior to our trip.

October 10th 2014

Dear Sister Meijer,

Thank you for helping us. We have been chosen to go to New York and we would like to show you how we are preparing. Here is a copy of the essay I wrote when I applied to the program :

“8 hundred million people.” Do you know what this number is?. This is the number of people who have grown up without access to education. This means one in five people in the world cannot read, write or use basic mathematics. Why should children in developing nations not have the same opportunities as those given to children growing up in developed countries? We should all have access to basic education.

The second Millennium Development Goal sets out to, “Achieve universal primary education”, but it is far from being reached. Why are there still so many children unable to have an education? There are three reasons. One is poverty. There are more than 2 hundred million people who have to choose work over school. In 89 countries, school fees place huge burdens on poor families. The second reason is that in some countries, schools do not have enough teachers, materials and buildings. Also, some children cannot go to school because it is too far. The third reason is society. In many nations girls are denied education. Out of the 8 hundred million illiterate people in the world, 64% are women. In unstable countries, war and violence also stop children from going to school. Many children die before the age of five.

We need to take action NOW to improve education worldwide. What can we do? I think providing free education is one effective solution. I think if we stop the system of school fees, the school attendance rate will rise. Actually, three countries in Africa abolished school fees and school attendance rose. But, they needed a lot of money to do so. I think developed nations should invest more money in education and in the building of better schools. High school students like myself can make a difference by using our time at school to become aware of the current situation of education around the world. “One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world!” These are the words of Malala Yousafzai. Education can change our future. It can improve the future of every single boy and girl. We need to use the education we here have all been so lucky to receive in order to change the world. “

This is the start of my journey. Since I was accepted to participate in this program, I will be able to see you.

. Thank you for helping us and please convey our gratitude to Sister Gwen Hoeffel who would be our chaperone, the staff at the United Nations, and everyone at the Convent of the Sacred Heart at 91st Street.

Sincerely,

Mai Kanazawa

December 10, 2014

Dear Sister Meijer,

Christmas is approaching and we are practicing hard for the Christmas Concert, and also preparing for our trip in February. As Mai said in her last letter, education is a cycle. We need to learn in order to teach, we need to know in order to help. One way we are using our education to make a difference, is by studying about the lives of refugees and immigrants. I would like to share with you, the personal reflections of all the members of our UN study tour.

Shion Okuyama

[The purpose of the SGH trip to New York] During the study trip, I want to be a part of the multi-cultural society of New York City.

[Things we learned up to now] There are many kinds of immigration. There are many illegal immigrants in America. Recently the American government amended the immigration law to take measures against this. Illegal immigration damages not only American society, but the immigrants and their families too.

Mai Kanazawa

[The purpose of the trip] My future goal is to help people around the world in need of education. So I am interested in seeing the UN at work. Also I would like to discuss world issues such as refugees and immigration with American students.

[Things we learned] We call America a “Melting Pot” and “Salad Bowl”. I learned that “Melting Pot” comes from an Israel Zangwill movie and “Salad Bowl” comes from the historian, Carl Degler. Coming from Japan, it is interesting for me to experience the multi-cultural society of America. Also, I am interested in learning about class and racial discrimination because this is a problem shared by Japan too. Even though America is a melting pot, there are still a lot of problems when it comes to dealing with different races and cultures. However, I see many different people who call America home and who call themselves proudly American. I hope Japan will someday be a home to many different kinds of immigrants too.

Hina Kouko

[The purpose of the trip] When we live in Japan, we don't have many chances to learn about refugee issues. So I want to witness it all with my own eyes and ears. I want to deepen my knowledge with experience and share it with the people around me. I also want to see what the UN is like.

[Things we learned] After researching about ethnic groups, I learned that many ethnic disputes have happened in America. I thought it may be because of living in a melting pot society of cultures and religions. I thought that I should research not only about race but also about ethnic groups. I know that they have a strong influence on American society.

Yukari Sajiki

[The purpose] The reason I want to go to New York is because it is one of the biggest cities in the world and I can see many kinds of people and life styles there. I am interested in the immigrant society living there. When we think about refugees and immigrants, we usually think about the refugee camps we see on the news. However, in New York, I will be able to see another kind of immigrant life.

[Things we learned] I learned that UNIQLO runs a recycle campaign for old clothes for refugees. AAR (Association for Aid and Relief, Japan) is an international NGO founded in Japan. This project is available in 15 countries.

Maho Kukita

[The purpose] I want to learn about the racial mix of New York. I want to see how so many different refugees and immigrants live together. I want to ask the people I meet what their views on immigration are. I want to learn about refugees too – how do they live? What can Japanese high school students do to help them?

[Things we learned] The country with the most refugees is Syria. The country with the second highest number of refugees is Afghanistan. The third, is Somalia. The percentage of elementary school attendance in Syria is 99.1%.

Mamika Makino

[The purpose] I want to learn more about symbiosis in the United States of America through this program. America is a multi-ethnic nation, which is very different from Japan. I want to know how so many different Americans live in symbiosis?

[Things we learned] The UNHCR mainly supports people by providing food and materials and works on supporting woman and children, helping the environment and providing medical care and education. Ms. Sadako Ogata was the eighth commissioner of the UNHCR. The current commissioner is Antonio Guterres from Portugal.

Ayaka Muranaka

[The purpose] It is said that America is a melting pot. America is made up of people from many different countries. I want to think about how they live closely and symbiotically. Also I am researching about the UNHCR.

[Things we learned] The UNHCR was established in 1951. The UNHCR works closely with NGOs and NPOs. Aid operations are usually divided into 3 stages. The UNHCR give not only water and food but also provides mental care and education.

Mio Sugimoto

[The purpose] During this study trip to New York, I'd like to get a deeper understanding of America by asking local people "What do you think about problems faced by refugees and immigrants?"

[Things we learned] I learned about discrimination in America. I learned that there have been many cases of racial tension towards African-Americans, people from Eastern Europe, Central America and even towards the Native Americans. I have begun to understand about the differences between immigration, slaves, refugees, people in exile and colonization.

Yuri Suzuki

[The purpose] I want to learn the differences between Japan and America. Also, I want to learn how the different races in America understand each other and live together in one country.

[Things we learned] I'm researching about refugee asylums in the Middle East, in Pakistan for example, and many other developing countries. we researched about how quickly the number of refugees worldwide rises on a daily basis At first, I used the internet but I couldn't find the data easily. Books have more data, although it could be outdated quickly.

Maiko Yoshida

[The purpose] While researching for my junior high graduation thesis, I learned that if I want to know about a nation's point of view, law and system, I should pay attention to clothes, provisions and how they live. So I want to study the differences between America and Japan. Once back in Japan, I want to tell people about what I learned.

[Things we learned] I learned that the number of refugee are not always in proportion to the GDP of the nation. and the number of refugees is on the rise and many people go to the UNHCR for support recently.

What we have learned makes us feel a sense of responsibility. Responsibility to be more aware, to take action and to respect the opportunities we have been given. I endeavor to grow up through this program. I will share my experiences with many

people after we come back to Japan. We need to work together to make the world a better place. For that, I want to learn the cause and background of what is happening and learn beyond the surface. Thank you for helping us. See you in the Big Apple!

Sincerely,

Yuri Suzuki

December 22, 2014

Dear Sister Meijer,

Thank you for your mail and thank you so much for setting up some meetings at UN offices such as Department of Public Information, Japanese Ambassador or other diplomat at the Japanese Mission, and the International Organization for Migration. We feel we are so privileged to be able to meet people who are the staff members of the UN. We are looking forward to learning how the UN works and how young people like us can be involved from afar. Also we would like very much to think about the Post 2015 development agenda and the position of Japan in that. We are grateful, since we will learn more about migration in the world. You told us about the possibility of UNHCR - the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. We would love that! Thank you so much! We will be able to tell you about what topic we would like them to talk on soon. Today, we reflected on what we have learned so far. And we noticed that we were beginning to wonder what the real symbiosis, or coexistence is. It is the most difficult point for us at the moment. We are looking forward to talking about it with you. In the meantime we wish you a wonderful Christmas!

Sincerely,

Hina Kohko

December 25, 2014

Dear Sister Meijer,

Happy Christmas! This year, having studied about refugees and immigrants, the story of the Holy Family is much more close to my heart.

We had our last research session before the New Year on 23rd, and I would like to share what I have learned.

Even though we live in such a modern society, the problem of refugees has not been solved. Many refugees still live without having their basic needs met, and contagious disease are prevalent in camps. One out of six children have lost their parents because of AIDs.

There is a deep relationship between the countries the refugees leave, and the

country they settle in. We need to understand the history and politics of the area. Advanced countries should cooperate actively with the developing countries that have so many refugees.

I understand how the UNHCR supports refugees. Sadako Ogata, who is the alumna of the Sacred Heart University in Japan is a great leader. We all were so impressed with her. I was made to think about how to support refugees and I learned that various people can work for the UNHCR.

Understanding the reason and background of a situation applies not only to the refugee problem and immigrant problem but to all things. It is necessary to deepen our learning.

Moreover when I research something, I should try not to have a narrow perspective but also understand the circumstances and trends in the world.

We wish you Happy 2015, and we are all looking forward to seeing you!
Please convey our gratitude to Sister Hoeffel, Mr. Ciancaglini, Mr. Chung, and Ms. Codina at the Convent of the Sacred Heart 91st Street, and to all the UN staff.

Sincerely,

Yuri Suzuki