



TAKING OFF

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Hello from All Corners of the World!

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I am currently working at a non-governmental organization called Terra Renaissance as an intern. I visited Uganda for two weeks as a part of my research and hearing mission for the organization in August, so I would like to share my experiences on that trip with you.

My Background

First of all, I would like to tell you why I became an intern at Terra Renaissance. When I was in high school, I saw a TV program about JAICA's Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers. It made me realize that there were so many people in the world who could not go to school and did not have enough food to eat. I hoped to be a member of the Volunteers someday. However, at the same time, I thought in order to be useful for others, I have to acquire more knowledge about the world and polish myself to be a better person. So I decided to major in International Studies at Osaka Gakuin University. During my four years at OGU, I became a helper for Open Campus and for the international students, and I often participated in events with them. I tried many different things even when they looked very difficult and I tried to do something useful for others. After graduation, I applied for JAICA's volunteer program, but I failed because my experiences were not sufficient enough for the program. Therefore, I am working at the organization which deals with global problems to gain experience in international cooperation and support programs. I plan to apply for JAICA's program again next year.

Visit to Uganda

I visited Uganda for two weeks last August. It was the first time for me to visit the African continent, so I felt excited, but at the same time a little bit worried because I didn't know what awaited me. The first surprising incident happened on the plane to Uganda. As soon as my plane landed, everyone clapped their hands probably because it landed safely. I, of



Children of former child soldiers at the rehabilitation center in Gulu

course, did the same as others. On the way from the airport to the city, I saw a vast red-soil land and endless blue sky. Poverty and starvation are the two big words that come up in my mind when I think of Africa, but I found it a beautiful place to be. I thought the saying "seeing is believing" is really true.

The capital of Uganda, Kampala was a surprisingly modern city. You can see second-hand Japanese cars and trucks, a big shopping mall, hotels and even golf courses. On the other hand, you can also find small children begging for money and selling goods on the street. On my way from Kampala to Gulu located in the northern part of Uganda, I also saw women and children carrying water tanks, and pupils in school uniform walking on the unpaved street in the morning. I found Gulu, where Acholis with their own language and culture live, quite different from the capital city.

I also found that Uganda is still greatly influenced by European colonial times. Due to its fertile land, farming and stockbreeding are still the major industries there. There is a large shopping mall which is foreign owned and sells mostly foreign goods. People in Uganda gain an income from farming, so they still have a long way to go until they make a stable income.



Top: A red-soil land in Uganda
Bottom: Children in the community of Gulu dancing at the rehabilitation center



Support Activity in Uganda

Terra Renaissance has a social rehabilitation center for former child soldiers in Gulu. A child soldier is anyone under the age of eighteen who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity. Some were captured by an anti-government army and forced to join a battle, some were even ordered to kill their own parents by the army. No matter how they became a soldier, all of them had terrible experiences in the past. It is said that there are still about 25,000 child soldiers in the world. Even if they were lucky enough to come home, they got hurt physically and psychologically. They are sometimes discriminated against by neighbors, and cannot go back into a community and find a stable job.

The rehabilitation center helps former child soldiers escape poverty and become financially independent by giving them fun-

damental education and helping them acquire skills such as sewing, woodworking, and carpentering. The support continues for three years, and during these years they receive a BHN support and counseling.

The final goal is to establish a small-sized microcredit business and to become financially independent. Furthermore, the center supports them in preserving Acholi traditional culture such as song and dance.

Through the hearing I conducted, I found that the experiences the former child soldiers have vary, depending on their age and gender. Some held a high rank in the army and gave orders, while some female soldiers were the victims of sexual abuse and got pregnant, and so on. Their experiences sounded so fearful and horrible. They were beyond my imagination. However, I also felt the energy and power with-

in themselves to face their past and live earnestly and steadily.

After I came back to Japan, I am still asking myself what I can do for them and how I can help them to live with hope.

I am determined to engage in international cooperation and support work, and to work for a non-governmental organization in the future. Problems lie not only overseas, but also in Japan. I would like to help change inequality and imbalance in the world, and to make a society where everyone can find meaning in life.

At last, to all OGU students, I hope you will challenge yourself and do many different things in your university life, both on campus and outside the campus. I believe it is important to look at what is happening around you and to take an interest in various issues, so that your life can be more meaningful and valuable to yourself and others.

“Spring at the Zoo” by Stephen Dalton & Daryl Arakaki

On March 30th, the Osaka sky was shedding winter's clutches. Bright and blue, it beckoned students from Osaka Gakuin University outside to celebrate Spring's annual rebirth. A dozen of them visited the Tennoji Zoo in South-Central Osaka. From morning to lunch, the students snapped pictures of lions, ocelots and rare birds, not to mention the beautiful sakura throughout the grounds. But this was no ordinary field trip; this class was there by special invitation of the Tennoji Zoo.

Although already popular with families from Osaka, the zoo is ramping up efforts to attract more foreign tourists. Working with Professors Arakaki (Hospitality) and Dalton (International Center), the zoo kindly offered Dalton's Intercultural Communication class free admission to the zoo in exchange for feedback on how to improve the foreign tourist experience.

According to zoo representative Ms. Okawa, “Foreign students' Focus Group Study is

a really valuable information source for us. We are willing to use their opinions because we think they are very unique and international.” These students hailed from France, Canada, Thailand, China, the Czech Republic and the USA. Not surprisingly, there was some diversity of opinion on how to improve the zoo, although some common themes emerged.

Findings

Most students agreed that one of the strengths of the zoo was the beautiful cherry blossoms that were in full bloom during the visit. Families were seated under the trees eating bentos while their children were playing alongside. Many also gave high marks to employee service. Student Jessica Caparini of Canada noted, “At the souvenir shop, I pretended not to be able to speak Japanese and just pointed at the item I wanted. Even though she didn't understand English, the clerk was very helpful, so I think most foreign tourists would feel comfortable buying items there.”

The large bird sanctuary also got high marks from students for the variety of birds and the roomy enclosure that housed them.

On the other hand, most students felt that many of the other animals' cages were too small, and said some of them seemed sad because their homes were so different from their natural habitat. Students admitted that increasing the space for each animal might mean fewer animals since space at the zoo is limited. Never-



Classroom study

theless, the tradeoff would be worth the improvement in animal welfare, an important factor for a majority of students. Finally, everyone agreed that signage could be improved by implementing a consistent design, including larger pictures and some explanation in English and Chinese. Ziwen Zhang of China reported, “On our own, many Chinese students visited the Kobe zoo in April, and we compared the signs from the two zoos. They were much better in Kobe, and we think Tennoji can do it too.” All of these initiatives would incur some cost; fortunately most students felt that, despite these shortcomings, the Tennoji zoo was underpricing adult admission at ¥500, and most would be willing to pay ¥700 to enter the park.

A Meaningful Final Project

A month after the visit, these same students did, in lieu of a final exam, six Powerpoint presentations of their findings which were videotaped for zoo management use.

Professor Dalton commented, “It's not



A group of students visiting the Tennoji Zoo



every day that a University class can have their final class project have such a powerful effect on the surrounding community as well as a lesson in how to communicate across cultures." Students were encouraged to implement lessons learned from class readings, including use of polite language, apologizing for mentioning any negative points, and bowing. Many students also underlined their key points in Japanese and made generous use of graphics so that their audience would feel more comfortable.

In order to replicate the feeling of a live audience, Japanese Osaka Gakuin University students attended the presentations. After viewing the presentations, OGU student Kizuku Yoshida said, "It was interesting to hear the perspective of foreign students. They mentioned things I didn't think of." Afterward, the class celebrated the end of the semester with their audience with pizza and conversation.

Songsitt Hunsavon from Thailand looked back on the class: "I learned in this class that even when you know from reading

how to change your communication strategy with the Japanese, it's harder to actually do it. I enjoyed doing the zoo presentation since it gave me another chance to practice getting my message across to a Japanese audience."

The Tennoji zoo hopes there will be many more chances for OGU Intercultural Communication students to give their feedback in the years to come- as Ms. Okawa says, "We are looking forward to their next presentation."

"Nabe Taikai" by Susette Burton

It was a delicious and fun night of International exchange and friendship building as a group of OGU students and International students got together to shop, cook and enjoy a variety of seasonal nabe (hot pot) dishes on campus recently.

About 49 students signed up in advance for the Nabe Taikai (party) held on November 22. The event was initially for students who are participating in the buddy and language programs and was later opened

up to other interested students.

Students contributed 500 yen each and that money was pooled together. Once sign-up was completed, students were divided into groups of seven. On the night of the party, each team was given an envelope with 3,500 yen and sent off to the local supermarket. Working together, each team planned and shopped for the ingredients they needed to make not only a delicious nabe, but also one that would impress their schoolmates, and a few hungry judges who were on hand for a bit of fun, friendly competition.

Students really bonded during this event of cultural exchange, fun and food.

And when asked, some of the Japanese students said that while the opportunity to enjoy a steaming, delicious nabe on a cold November night was a plus, they enjoyed the team work and the chance to connect



with OGU's exchange students even more.

"To give them such a good experience to enjoy Japanese culture was the best part," said one OGU student.

OGU Lecturer Greg Nakajo organized the event and was supported by the International Center staff and some of the Shoin teachers at OGU. He said this was the second year to host the nabe party and that based on the success, "they will definitely have to do it again."



"I-Chat's Global Language Camp" by Stella Maxwell



This past May the I-Chat Lounge held the first ever Global Language Camp at Osaka Gakuin University. The mini language camp is an event that offers students the opportunity to immerse themselves in various world languages, and experience a taste of culture from the people who speak them. Among I-Chat's

many goals is to help OGU students become well-rounded global citizens; the camp is just one of I-Chat's many unique and fun learning opportunities offered to students to do just that.

Many OGU students as well as international students joined this year's Global Language Camp to experience the "hands-on" language learning. Languages featured at the camp were English, Chinese, German, Korean, French and Spanish. To kick off the camp, students were given a "passport" to carry with them as they rotated to each "country" to complete activities. Station featured activities included singing, speaking out, interactive language games and drama highlighting that station's featured country/language. Once students completed the station activities, they would receive a stamp in their passport. A loud bell sounded indicating another rotation

around the world was about to begin. These activities were designed to teach the students not only some basic greetings and introductions in each of the six languages, but also expose them to music and knowledge of international foods. Station facilitators consisted of I-Chat staff, OGU professors, and international exchange students. All of these individuals were Global Citizens themselves and were



either speakers of the world languages or nationals from one of the countries. Students were excited to interact with bilingual and trilingual teachers. "I never experienced such a fun way of learning like that, I want to learn to speak more than one language in my lifetime." one student remarked.

The camp-style experience inspired students to want to learn more about languages and cultures outside of their own. Since language and culture go hand-in-hand, this camp is an ideal setting to satisfy students' natural curiosity about the world. While the everyday atmosphere at I-Chat hosts an international flavor with people from all over the world

interacting and learning from one another, the Global Language Camp fostered an additional layer of "Global Community" spirit at I-Chat this past spring semester.

Naturally, supporting students as they aspire to become genuine global citizens should be the goal of any university. I-Chat believes it is equally important to create unique, innovative, and fun opportunities for students to grow towards that goal. The Global Language Camp is one of I-Chat's ideas to offer one more learning resource for students to have at their fingertips right here on their very own university campus.



Flavor in Guilin, China by Tao Meng

Considered one of the most scenic landscapes in the world, Guilin is a truly mystical place. There is a saying in China that Guilin, with its tremendous cliffs and spectacular scenery is the most beautiful place in the world. I hope you will go and see for yourself. The name Guilin comes from sweet osmanthus (Mokusei in Japanese). I recommend that you visit Guilin in late September or early October when the osmanthus flowers are in full bloom for an extra special treat. When you take a slow boat ride up the clear Li River, you can see numerous strangely shaped peaks along the misty river and you feel like you are in a painting of fantastic scenery. There are many direct flights from Shanghai and Beijing to the Guilin Liangjiang International Airport. Please go there and immerse yourself in a tranquil and beautiful world.



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