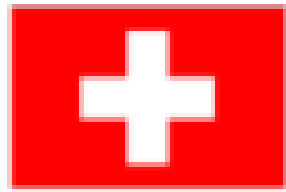


Project to empower youth victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake
Support Our Kids Homestay Program



2015 POLAND SWISS STAY
～Reflecting on reconstruction and peace～
REPORT



Support Our Kids
ひとりじゃないよ

Schedule

Poland & Switzerland Homestay Program Schedule

DATE			AM	PM	Accommodation
1	12th	SAT	12:00 Meet at Tokyo Station	13:00~17:30 Orientation at Japanese Red Cross Society 17:45 Transfer to Olympic Center	Olympic Center
2	13th	SUN	07:12 Depart Sangubashi 07:15 Arrive at Shinjuku 07:20 Depart Shinjuku 07:41 Arrive at Nippori 08:02 Depart Nippori on Sky Liner 08:41 Arrive at Narita International Airport 11:10 Departure on LX 161	15:50 Arrive at Zurich 17:15 Depart Zurich Airport 19:10 Arrive at Warsaw Chopin Airport	Homestay at Warsaw
3	14th	MON	Sight-seeing in Warsaw	14:00 Courtesy visit to Japan Embassy (Presentation and exchange with Nazareth Highschool) 17:00 Visit Japanese School (Presentation and exchange) 18:30 Warszawa Centralna	Homestay at Warsaw
4	15th	TUE	8:00 Depart for Polkowice	Visit to Sanden Holdings Factory	Polkowice
5	16th	WED	Depart for Auschwitz	Visit Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp	Krakow
6	17th	THU	12:00 Visit Manggha Centre	13:00 Lunch at Manggha Centre 14:45 Cultural exchange with students of Jagiellonian University in Krakow 18:30 Christmas party with students	Krakow
7	18th	FRI	9:00 Sight-seeing in Krakow (Lecturer: Mr. Miyanaga - artist) 12:00 Lunch	14:00 Cultural exchange with local highschool 17:30 Cultural exchange with Manggha Center Japanese Language School students	Krakow
8	19th	SAT	10:30 Second visit to Manggha Centre Japanese Language School	14:00 Visit to Kopalnia soli Wieliczka 18:00 Sight-seeing in the city	Krakow
9	20th	SUN	Depart for Warsaw	Meet Andrzej Wajda	Warsaw
10	21st	MON	09:40 Depart Warsaw on LX1343 11:50 Arrive at Zurich and meet coordinator, Ms. Tayama	Travel to Bern Early Dinner with Ms. Tayama's family	Bern (Youth Hostel)
11	22nd	TUE	Travel to Rossiniere Visit Grand Chalet (Home of Countess Setsuko Klossowska de Rola)		Bern (Youth Hostel)
12	23rd	WED	Travel to Geneve Visit Musee Ariana	14:00~16:00 Visit International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Tour around the city (United Nations Office at Geneva)	Bern (Youth Hostel)
13	24th	THU	Visit the old city of Bern	Christmas Market 23:00 Visit the Cathedral of Bern (Christmas Concert)	Bern (Youth Hostel)
14	25th	FRI	10:00 Visit the Cathedral of Bern	Free time	Bern (Youth Hostel)
14	26th	SAT	Travel to Zurich Airport	13:00 Depart Zurich Airport on LX 160	In-flight
15	27th	SUN	08:55 Arrival at Narita International Airport 10:30 Closing Ceremony 11:58 Depart Narita International Airport on Sky Liner	12:43 Arrive at Ueno Station and travel back to Tohoku	—

12/12

Orientation at Japanese Red Cross Society

- 13:00- Welcome speech and introduction of guests
- 13:20- Self-introduction
- 13:35- Program
- 13:35- Presentation① (About Poland)
- 14:10- Humanitarian aid and activities of Red Cross
- 15:00- Student Presentation
- 15:30- Case Studies
- 16:15- Introduction of guest
- 16:30- Presentation② (About Switzerland)
- 17:00- Closing



Orientation at Japanese Red Cross Society



H.E. Cyryl Kozaczewski
Ambassador of the Republic of Poland



H.E. Urs Bucher
Ambassador of Switzerland



Masaharu Matsuzaki
Director General, Planning and Public Relations Office
Japanese Red Cross Society



Noboru Okabe
General Manager for Japan & Korea
Swiss International Airlines

Messages from the guests:

I am so glad that you will be able to see Poland. We remember how Japan and the Japanese Red Cross Society saved lives of Polish orphans who were transported in Japan from Siberia. We are still greatly thankful for this.

H.E. Cyryl Kozaczewski

Visiting Switzerland after Poland will be such a great experience. The Red Cross is part of the answer to the tragical event that have led to situations like Auschwitz. Please take maximum profit from your stay in Switzerland to learn the message for peace.

H.E. Urs Bucher

"Our world. Your move." is the slogan of the Red Cross. You all have had painful experiences. We believe it is now your turn to lend a hand and support others. We hope you will take this chance to reflect and learn more about helping others.

Mr. Masaharu Matsuzaki

12/12 Orientation at Japanese Red Cross Society



Ryotaro Mori
Planning and Public Relations Office
Japanese Red Cross Society



Students learning about Henri Dunant, the history of Red Cross and their current activities. They also found information about the Polish orphans in Siberia.



Kazunori Iwata
Disaster Management and Social Welfare Department
Japanese Red Cross Society



After learning about the Red Cross, the participants presented their thoughts and goals for the program.

Student Presentations

"During the disaster, I saw teams helping people under the tents. I believe that reconstruction of Tohoku advanced thanks to the help of Red Cross. We leave for Poland and Switzerland tomorrow. I hope to learn about reconstruction and peace as we visit the headquarters in Switzerland and Auschwitz in Poland."

Rio Watanabe (Sendai, Miyagi)

We learned to always remember what happened, and help others by spreading the word. I hope to make the best out of this program as we reflect on reconstruction and peace.

Yoshihiro Takahashi (Sendai, Miyagi)

12/13-15 Warsaw, Poland

Presentations at Japan Embassy & Nazareth High School,
homestay, and cultural exchange at Warszawska Szkoła Języka Japońskiego



Warszawska Szkoła Języka Japońskiego



Sight-seeing at Starówka



Meeting host families at Warsaw Chopin Airport



Presentation at the Embassy of Japan in Poland

Rio Watanabe... My host family included Adam, Lisa and their 1st grade daughter Emilia. Adam works as President of an application development company. They mentioned Emilia was excited to see us, but once we met, she got very shy. However, as time passed by, she drew and presented me photos of Christmas trees and played together.

Takumi Hatakeyama... My host family had 5 family members - parents and 3 daughters. The dining table was full of ham, sausage and salami. They also offered raw paprika, cauliflower and radish. I presented them with Masaki Wakame, which is seaweed made in Iwate and they liked it! I'm not very good at English so I asked lots of questions such as, "What's this?"

Fumiya Sato... My host family had many pets - one dog, three cats and three hedgehogs. My host sister, Martha, made me pancakes for breakfast. She talked about her love for Japan and we bonded over rock music and anime. Warsaw city was also very beautiful!

12/15 Polkowice, Poland Sanden Holdings Factory



Christmas Party at Polkowice High School



After a tour around the school, the participants were interviewed by a local TV station.



Yoshihiko Yamasaki
(SANDEN General Manager/Corporate Planning and Cost Control)
Anna Zdanowicz
(SANDEN General Affairs Supervisor)
attended the participants and helped with translations.

12/15 We departed for Polkowice on a chartered bus. After arrival, we headed to Polkowice High School for our presentations. The local students welcomed us with Polish breakfast and Christmas presents. After our presentations, we held a cultural exchange - we taught them the Japanese way of rock paper scissors, and wrote their names in Japanese. The 2 weeks in Europe went by really fast!

12/15 Polkowice, Poland Sanden Holdings Factory



Ms. Anna Zdanowicz (General Affairs Supervisor) provided an introduction regarding Sanden, and its history.



After their lecture, the students asked questions such as:
"What are the key concepts needed for Japanese companies to succeed overseas?"
"What is the relationship between the distinct features of Poland as a country, and Japanese companies?"

12/15 Polkowice, Poland Sanden Holdings Factory



Factory tour: Seeing the manufacturing process



After the tour, they all gathered for dinner and learned more about Polish culture.

12/15 Polkowice, Poland

Sanden Holdings Factory & Polkowice High School



Kazuki Oda... We headed to Polkowice early in the morning and visited Polkowice High School. Compared to Warsaw, Polkowice had a more rural vibe and the people were very gentle. We presented our experiences during the disaster to the students. We also visited a factory of Sanden and saw the manufacturing process of aircon compressors. Although the tools were mostly made in Japan, many Polish men and women were working. I sensed the difficulty they had due to language barrier and difference in culture in the starting days of the factory. Yet, I also felt that Polish agrees with Japanese skill and technology. In just a period of two days, we've met many Japanese who are succeeding outside Japan. They all have different beliefs and thoughts, and I was very impressed that they are actively working overseas. Although I am only away for a short period of time, I hope to show pride in being Japanese and learn as much as I can.

P.S. Thank you for the birthday celebration! It has become an unforgettable memory.

Takumi Hatakeyama... Polkowice High School welcomed us with snacks and cake. They also listened very carefully to our presentation. The greatness of Japanese technology has always been said, but I've never truly thought so until we had the factory tour at Sanden. I hope to keep the positive image of the Japanese and enjoy the rest of my stay here.

Ryoma Sakuyama... The students at Polkowice High School showed great interest in Japan and our culture. I truly believe we are all connected, and like the students, it is important to try and understand one another. I hope to get to know and talk to as much people as I can for the rest of my stay.

12/16 Visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camps



Entrance to Auschwitz Concentration Camp



Infront of the Birkenau Concentration Camp



With the help of a Polish guide, the participants took a 3-hour tour and learned about the concentration camps.

Takumi Hatakeyama... We've all seen beautiful views and buildings since the beginning of this trip until we got to Auschwitz. A tour guide took us around and we see a many piles of human hair in a showcase as big as 2 classrooms. Even worse, it was only 4 days worth. There were also glasses, bags, shoes in great numbers and felt very shocked. On a different thought, I felt lucky to witness such things at a young age. I felt a stronger sense and need for peace.

Fumiya Sato... I had a very valuable experience at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camps. With many buildings left as it was, the feelings I felt are very hard to describe in words. Thinking of how many were killed in this place everyday gave me shivers. This should never happen and this is something we need to pass on to younger generations.

Yoshihiro Takahashi... As we entered the building, I felt the heavy and intense atmosphere. There many bags and shoes that belonged to those who were executed. The guide mentioned that, the execution of a person was decided in a second - to execute or to use for labor. I felt great sadness at the shallow views on human life and I hoped for this to never happen again.

12/16-20 Krakow, Poland

Uniwersytet Jagielloński, local high school, Manggha Museum, and Kopalnia soli Wieliczka



The old city of Krakow with Christmas decorations.



Participants in Manggha Centre, with a vast collection of ukiyo-e.



Presentation at Uniwersytet Jagielloński



Visiting another World Heritage site Kopalnia soli Wieliczka

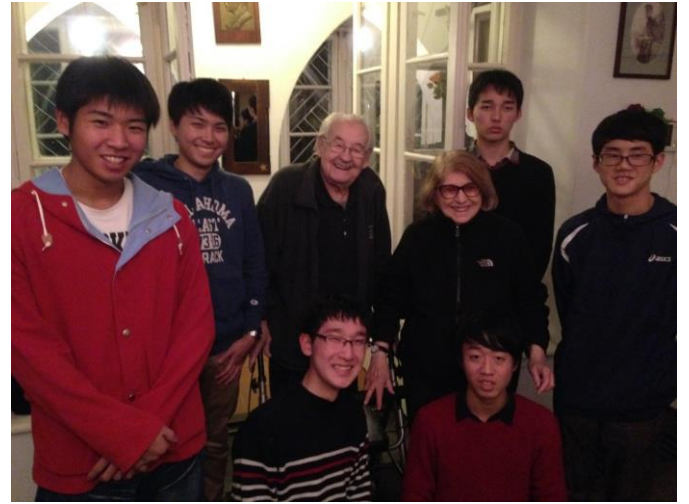


Presentation and cultural exchange with local students

Yoshihiro Takahashi... We also visited a local high school in Krakow that concentrated on the electrical industry. I also attend a similar school, and realized although we live in different countries, we study almost the same things. They all listened carefully as we presented our experiences during the disaster. The principal mentioned that they were able to learn things they can never find on the internet, and that they were glad to learn about it. It will almost be 5 years since the disaster, and I worry that people will slowly forget about it. It has been great, being able to tell others about our experiences. I hope to concentrate on how I contribute to the future and reconstruction of Tohoku, when I get back to Japan.

Rio Watanabe... We found many Japanese paintings at Manggha Centre. We were able to see the details such as dark to light gradation, which shows high skill of the Japanese. We also saw at the "Lady with an Ermine" by Leonard da Vinci at Zamek Królewski na Wawelu. It was interesting to see regardless of how long a painting has existed, it's still able to see a kind of beauty that cannot be portrayed by digital technology.

12/20 Special invitation to the home of Director Andrzej Wajda



The students visited the home of Academy-award winning director Andrzej Wajda, who directed movies such as *Popiół i diament*, *Kanał*, and *Man of Iron*.



Wife of Director Andrzej Wajda also talked about the restoration of Warsaw – as her father is Professor Jan Zachwatowicz, who contributed to the Polish restoration.



Director Wajda discussed his opinions on “peace” and mentioned that “Peace is to live”

Ryoma Sakuyama... We visited the home of director Andrzej Wajda. He was very kind, down to earth and had a very nice smile. Prior to meeting him, I had the chance to see some of his movies. It was rich in social nature, symbolism and stimulates our emotions. It can be said the culture is one of the key concepts in history. We are all affected by culture, from our daily life to our mentality. Director Wajda uses movies to affect and send messages to Poland and whole world. He has great achievements that should be passed on from generation to generation. With internet and SNS, it has become easy to share information in the 21st century. Like Director Wajda, I hope to become a “sender” of information to change for a better world.

12/21-26 Bern, Switzerland

Stay at Zurich, attend church on Christmas day and visit to the Christmas Market



12/24 Attending mass on Christmas Eve at Bern Cathedral



Experiencing a European Christmas



Christmas Party at a youth hostel



Welcome party and trying raclette

Kazuki Oda...It was an all-boys Christmas party in Bern! We had a chance to experience a European Christmas. We took a walk around Bern in the morning, also going to the Christmas market and going to a spot to see a beautiful view of Bern from a higher location. At night, we celebrated Christmas while eating snacks and cake!

12/22 Rossiniere, Switzerland Grand Chalet de Rossinière and Gruyère



A beautiful view of Alps surrounding Rossiniere village



Meeting Countess Setsuko Klossowska de Rola, wife of late painter, Balthus Klossowska de Rola



Grand Chalet de Rossinière

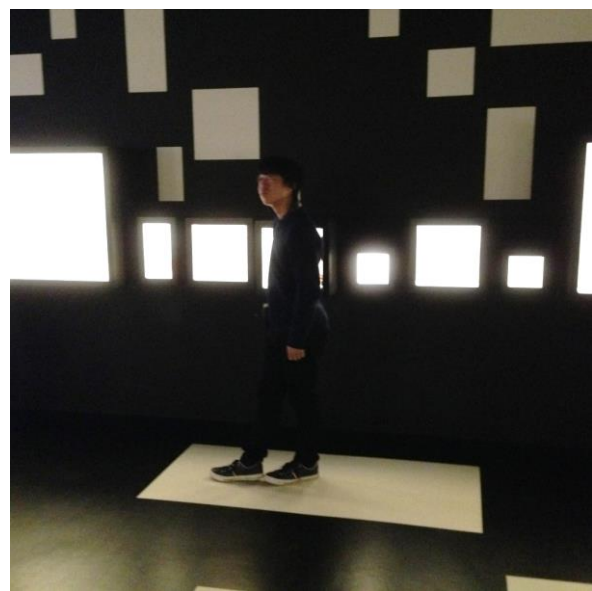


Enjoying cheese fondue in Gruyère

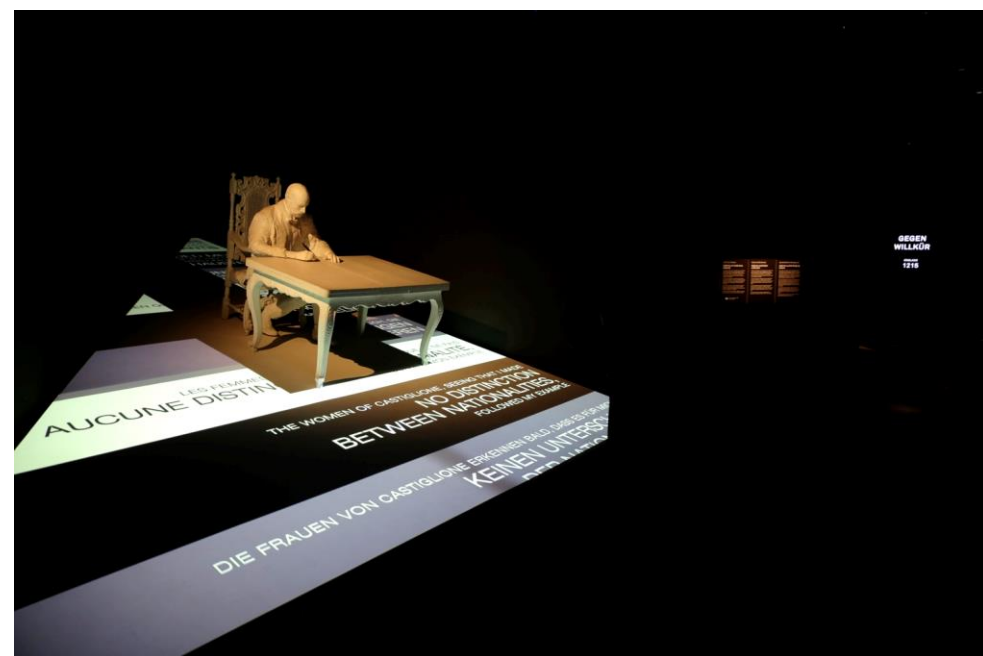
Kazuki Oda... We visited the Grand Chalet and met Ms. Setsuko. She welcomed us in her kimono and told us about the building. It used to be a hotel, therefore it was strongly built. As we spoke with Ms. Setsuko, I felt her strong pride in being Japanese. Count Balthus loved Japan which resulted in Ms. Setsuko studying and loving her country even more. With Japan slowly taking in Western culture, she has put great importance in the beauty of Japanese culture such as kimono – and she has shared this overseas. I felt this was a good chance for me to consider and learn about my own country.

12/23 Geneva, Switzerland

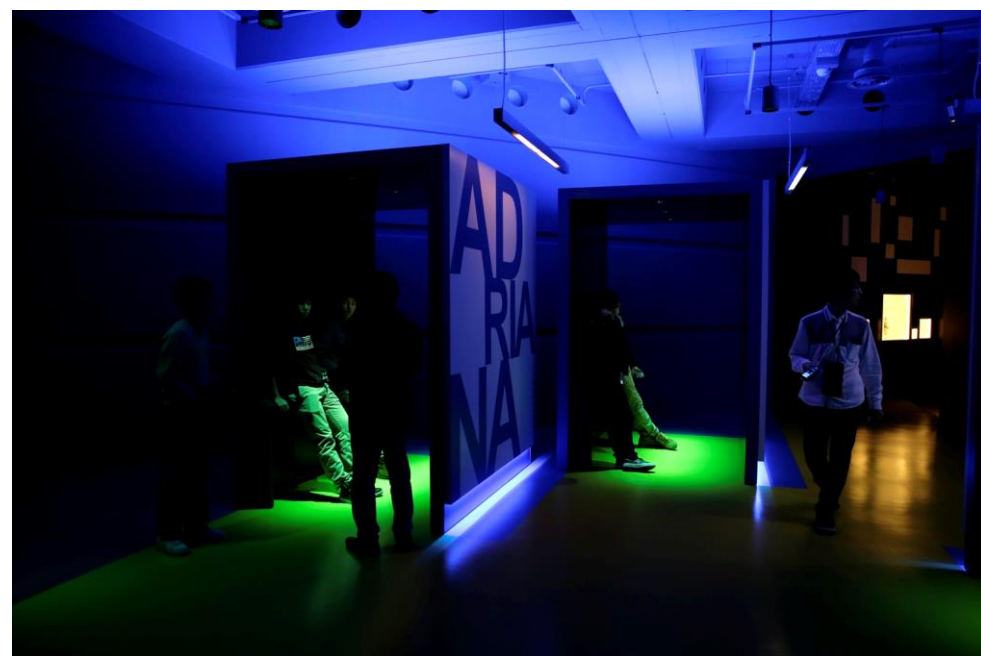
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum



Visiting the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum



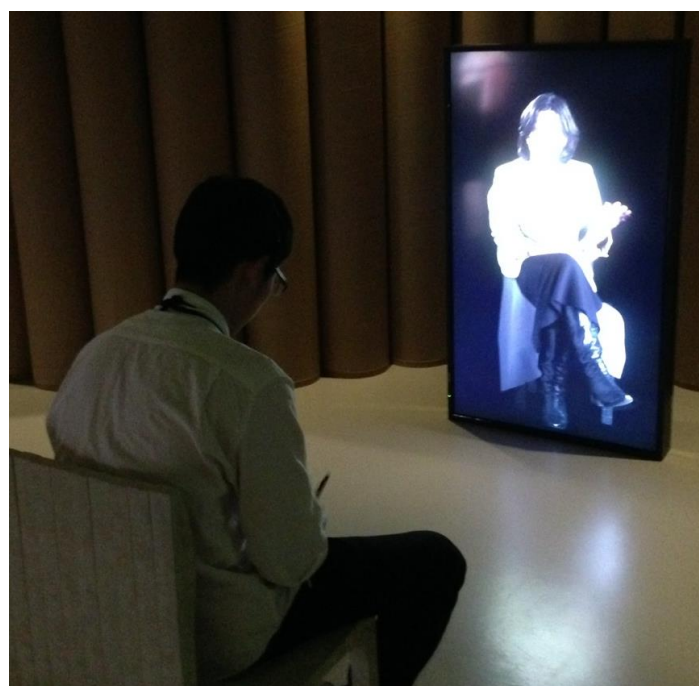
Un souvenir de Solférino by Henri Dunant



Booths showing very artistic photos and videos



A painting by Henry Dunant on exhibition for a limited period of time



Participants listening and taking notes of testimonials



Messages from family members of those in areas of conflict

12/23 Geneve, Switzerland

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Schedule

14:00~ Tour and lecture about IFRC

(Ms. Sayaka Matsumoto/Grants Coordinator Strategic Partnerships and International Relations Departments)

14:30~Corresponding to disasters

(Disaster response team·Cash Distribution Officer, Disaster Relief Emergency Fund Officer)

15:15~Student presentations

15:45~End



Lecture about International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



Tour around the headquarters



It is very rare for victims they've helped come to the headquarters, so members of the Disaster Response team came to meet the students.

12/23 Geneve, Switzerland

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



■ Messages to students

You were all very young when the earthquake and tsunami hit, but I believe you've all worked hard enough to be here, telling us about your difficult experiences in English. I also believe you are blessed to have wonderful people around you to give this chance. Please don't forget this, and we look forward to your future activities in the future.

Sayaka Matsumoto/Grants Coordinator Strategic Partnerships and International Relations Departments

We saw a big earthquake hit Nepal last year which produced victims, but it is a first for us to have victims come to Geneve and tell us about their experiences. We understand it is difficult to talk about these experiences, but thank you for this valuable time and opening up to us.

Disaster Response Team • Cash Distribution Officer

■ Thoughts of participants

I feel so lucky to have this kind of experience in Geneve. Although complicated, I would not be here without the disaster. I want to give my gratitude to those who are working for Tohoku and the Red Cross. In a few years, we will go into the real world and I hope to contribute to the reconstruction of Tohoku.

Rio Watanabe

12/23 Geneve, Switzerland

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



December 23, 2015

Today, we visited the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at Geneve. We learned the history and current activities of the Red Cross, and developed a deeper understanding of what they do. Thank you very much for all of your time.

Members of the Red Cross were kind enough to teach us many various topics but one particular topic stood up to me – the importance of support after the disaster. Unfortunately, after disasters occur, results of after shock like hunger occur and aids are sent. However, once the disaster stricken area is assessed to be “restored”, all aid and support stop. However, this “restoration” does not mean a complete restoration.

Destroyed roads, banks and houses are now reconstructed, and this type of “restoration” may be complete. However, there are still issues of lack and inconsistent preparation, inspection – for example, looking into causes. If the disaster were to happen again, these issues will lead to the same thing. What can the global society do to prevent this? We learned that the Red Cross carefully plans to provide this kind of support. Providing support of continuously searching for causes may help with casualties and damage. As Red Cross members talked about this, I thought of how we can apply this to the reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake. All six participants of this project are from the three prefectures that were mainly affected by the disaster. Although we all live in different places, we all have one topic to consider, which is reconstruction.

Although there are many undertaking reconstruction projects, I think we need to consider the reasons why it resulted in enormous damage and casualties. Why were so many lives taken by the tsunami? Why did the Fukushima nuclear power plant explode? These are the questions we need to find answers to in order to come up with measures for less damage and loss. However, it is also important to keep these measures and restoration separate. Even now, many are still unable to live the lives they led prior to the disaster. It is important to prioritize aid to these civilians. Although we will have many hardships through the process, we should never give up.

A famous writer, Kenji Miyazawa, from Tohoku wrote a book called “Ame nimo makezu”. He wrote his ideas on humanity and public service. I believe he is an ideal, his persistence, ability to take action and love for his hometown. That is the kind of person I want to become.

Ryoma Sakuyama (Fukushima)

12/23 Geneve, Switzerland

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



Today, we visited the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum. I thought I knew the concept of Red Cross but realized how much I did not know until I came here. There were many informative displays and found a radio project to be the most shocking. It was to send messages for those who had family members become hostage in disputed territories. The panic and sadness was very distinct in their voices and it brought tears to my eyes. Realizing that so much more people are going through such difficulties made me thankful for the life I have.

Takumi Hatakeyama (Iwate)

Upon visiting the museum, I realized the importance of spreading information as preventive measures during disasters. My town had large speakers around, but was broken by the earthquake. I remember this was how people went on with no information about what happened. We also visited the headquarters of Red Cross, and thankfully, they took great interest in our presentations. They even said, "Thank you for coming to Geneve to tell us about your experiences". This has been such a valuable experience.

Yoshihiro Takahashi (Miyagi)

I learned more about Henri Dunant at the museum and even saw very important documents such as the Geneva Conventions. It was fascinating to see and learn all about Red Cross, who has defended people all over the world. We presented in the afternoon and realized the importance of sharing our experiences. It is unfortunate we experienced such disaster at a young age, however it has forced us to learn many things. I was in 6th grade, but to be here presenting in English years later, helped me to believe I may have grown even just a little bit. We only have a few days left, but I hope to enjoy and be thankful for this chance.

Fumiya Sato (Fukushima)

During the orientation prior to our departure, Ambassador Urs Bucher mentioned that one of the answers as to why situations like Auschwitz happened, can be found in Red Cross. As I was looking around the booths and displays, I found that in Geneva Convention 1, the Red Cross only accommodated soldiers, which is why help to civilians took a long time. This resulted in a new Geneva Convention. The Red Cross has had great achievements and I was encouraged to volunteer myself.

Kazuki Oda (Iwate)

12/27 Closing Ceremony



Closing ceremony at Narita Airport



The students came back and talked about their experiences in the past 2 weeks



Students presented the Japanese Red Cross Society with their gratitude for their big support

■ Comments from guests

These past 2 weeks may have changed your way of thinking of point of view. Living in Japan, which is a safer and peaceful place than some, makes it difficult for us to realize that we humans are all connected. You may have felt this, after this experience. Information about the Polish orphans are very well known in Poland, but not so much in Japan. When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, we received unbelievable number of support from countries all over the world. Please share your experiences, and the new things you learned to your family and friends.

Masahiko Oonishi (Japanese Red Cross Society)

It is such an honor to have been able to visit one of the countries with such history. I hope you continue expose yourselves in foreign cultures as it will help you grow and develop. Also, please don't forget to "Learning by Doing".

Masakazu Hirano (Support Our Kids Project Specialist)

Student Reports



Rio Watanabe (Miyagi)

I've never had interest in going overseas. I always thought, "Japan is the safest place in the world" or "The Japanese are the most kind, and not everyone overseas is".

For those who have been abroad, they usually tell me, "I went abroad for a couple weeks and it changed my life!". I always thought, only shallow people believe their lives have changed just for going for a few weeks. I've always thought that way until now. I now believe, depending on who you go with and who you meet, *can* change your life and perspective, even just going for two weeks. I've met so many new people in this trip. They all have dreams and goals. The students who are studying Japanese taught me words even I didn't know about. I asked all of them why they study Japanese language, and it was mostly "because I like Japanese anime". The next answer was, "because it is a beautiful language". I didn't realize in the beginning, but to think of the meaning and design of the characters, really makes it beautiful. Being born and living in a country with such beautiful language made me realize how lucky I am. I hope to be part of advertising or event planning industry when I grow up. One of our group goals for this trip was to "find ideas and inspiration" – and I think I found many. We saw many Japanese paintings and posters by Polish designers. I believe the impact and significance of information given at a single glance, is the most important concept in advertising. However, like Japanese paintings, you need to look closely to see the details of the art. Although the impact at first glance is important in advertising, I also think it will be interesting to have an ad that requires one to look closely for the message.

After meeting Countess Setsuko at the Grand Chalet, she mentioned "The Japanese have a national costume called kimono, but it is such a waste because everyone dresses in a western style." If I was a foreigner coming in to Japan, I would find it interesting if everyone was wearing a kimono. There are so many old and beautiful buildings in Poland and Switzerland, and it becomes a joy in coming to these countries. It made me feel like Japan is losing this. We still have tourist spots of Japanese architecture, but it is all concrete in places we live. If we are to reconstruct, it might be interesting to add a Japanese taste to it, and make it a tourist spot as well! I've learned and experience so much in this trip. Thank you to the supporters of Support Our Kids and everyone in Poland and Switzerland. I can never thank you enough. Someday, I'll become known, successful and provide smiles to as many.

I will see you all very soon, it's a promise!

Student Reports



Takumi Hatakeyama (Iwate)

As I looked back in the past two weeks, I realized there are many things I should have done and regret not doing so. Yet, it has been full of experiences that made me grow even just a little.

I decided on three goals prior to our departure: 1) To apply the process of restoration of Warsaw, to the reconstruction of Tohoku. 2) To communicate. 3) To find a future goal.

On our first day in Poland, I saw the beautiful city of Warsaw and couldn't believe that it was destroyed during World War II. We met a Japanese teacher, Sakamoto-san, and showed us photos of Warsaw during the war. Seeing the before and after photos was very moving and made me think of Tohoku. Everyone who I met had love and pride for their country and culture, which I believe is the key to reconstruction. I want to share my experiences here to everyone back home.

I am not confident I was able to communicate very well. I have always been terrible at English, and would shut down my ears whenever I heard English. I had a hard time while we were socializing with other students, but after receiving advice, I slowly became able to speak myself.

Finally, I think I achieved the goal of finding a future goal for myself. Compared to how lazy I am back home, I see that the Japanese working overseas are full of passion and working hard towards a particular goal. Upon seeing this, I thought of becoming a Japanese teacher overseas. As we visited local schools in Poland, we found many who loved the Japanese culture. What is so common to us, is something very special to them. Going overseas helped me learn more about their culture, but also my own.

I've become to love Poland, and therefore will work to become a Japanese teacher there.

Student Reports



Fumiya Sato (Fukushima)

Our trip to Poland was on a tight schedule, yet it also felt at ease. On the other hand, Switzerland went by very quickly. In these past 2 weeks, we visited Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, headquarters of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, shared our experiences of the disaster to many, and had many chances to reflect on peace and reconstruction.

The population of Poland rapidly decreased after the war. It was also taken by the Soviet Union and experienced a dark age despite the end of the war. The Poland we saw was completely and beautifully restored. Everyone we met were kindly and friendly. After our presentations, they all gave kind words such as "I want to go to Fukushima!" while others questioned "What can we high school students do?". Although what I did is comparatively small, I feel like I was able to introduce and/or change their views of Fukushima. Despite Poland being a different country from Japan, there are some who introduce our culture there. I would like to continue to introduce my hometown to as many as I can. I realized the importance of keeping our new acquaintances. I made new friends and somehow, we are all connected. My host family even said I can stay with them once more, the next time I visit Poland. I have so much gratitude for these new friends I made, it has become an importance to me.

We also would like to thank the Japanese school who took care of us, took us around, and spent dinner with us in our short stay. It is now our turn to invite you all to Tohoku. This trip, including our escorts, we all boys and I had a great time. I believe it is some kind of destiny that we were chosen for this program. Thank you to Support Our Kids and its supporters. It is now our turn to support others.

Student Reports



Ryoma Sakuyama (Fukushima)

70 years since the end of the war. In such a memorial year, many television shows featured the war and the news featured issues regarding security bills. What is peace? What can be do, as Japanese, about peace? We had many opportunities to think these questions through. We had a chance to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps in Poland. It was a concentration camp made by the Nazi Party to exterminate the Jewish community. They were divided into hard labor, death at gas chambers or death by shooting. I had a very intense feeling of sadness as we walked around the camps. On display were bags, shoes, and hair of the exterminated Jews. They also displayed photos of some of the Jews and you can see confusion in their faces. I think Auschwitz has a different feel to the war heritages we have in Japan. For example, heavy casualties and damage resulted in the nuclear bomb that left the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima. However, many of these are destroyed structures. The concentration camps are left us at is, and it is clear to see the destructive force of war and humans. It had a heavy and negative energy that only those who have visited can feel.

I'm only in my teenage years and have never experience war. The upcoming 80 years, 90years, then 100 years since the end of the war will have lose most of its witnesses.

I am confident that we had a very valuable experience and something we cannot waste. If one pen, one book, and one child can change the world, I would like to do so.

Student Reports



Yoshihiro Takahashi (Miyagi)

The past two weeks have been full of many different experiences. Going to a place for the very first time, with boys you've only just met, learning English.. it all made me very nervous.

The old city of Warsaw was very beautiful, and unbelievable to think it was once destroyed during the war. There were carriages on the street and felt like I time-travelled to the past. The food had so much more volume than Japanese food. The sausages were at least double to size of what we have in Japan.

Stepping into Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp was heartbreaking. We visited the gas chambers and all I could do was sigh. Anything like this should never ever happen again.

A week later, we're off to Switzerland and had very delicious food, especially the cheese. We had raclette and fondue, something we usually can't eat in Japan. On Christmas Eve, we went to church. Unlike Japan, family members gather for Christmas so we saw lots of families together.

We also shared our experiences during the disaster. There aren't many earthquakes in Europe so it was difficult to explain by mouth, but the pictures said it all. They all listened carefully which made me realize the importance of telling.

We've met so many people in the 2 weeks we were there and I had a great time everyday. Although 2 weeks is only a blink compared to a life time, it has changed me and made me a better person. When we return to Japan, I would like to start activities for the reconstruction of my hometown. Thank you all very much.

Student Reports



Kazuki Oda (Iwate)

Our two week program has finished and I both a sense of fulfillment and sadness. The main reason I joined this program is because I wanted to find a way to help with reconstruction of Tohoku. Although I wasn't badly affected compared to many, I still hope to help and contribute. My answer for now is, to not forget and continue to share our experiences, and do what we can despite of how small it is. In order to avoid forgetting, we need to share and that is something I can do. Therefore, I have made it on my goals to share our experiences. As easy as it may sound, it's difficult to relive those days.

The theme of this program is "reflect on reconstruction and peace". We visited Auschwitz and Director Wajda. One similarity between the two is "war". To think of how many people were killed in the concentration camps is depressing. Seeing it in person is even more terrifying. As a person who had the chance to see it, I believe it is important to spread the word. Director Wajda also experienced the war. His father was killed in result of the war, therefore he has many thoughts regarding war and peace. He had such a warming voice and a lovely smile, but it was different as he talked about the war. He found movies to be a way to avoid people to forget. Seventy years since the war, and people who have experienced it are decreasing. Without these people, there are not a lot of people who are able to talk about it which brings the risk of it happening again. Even with the Great East Japan Earthquake, children are born without knowledge of it, but we tell and teach them about it – which is similar to our presentations. If we're unable to send the right message across, there will be no way to prevent further loss and damage. I believe our presentations are of this much importance. All I can do for now is share our experiences and let people know of what happened.

I also met many Japanese in this trip. They all had an opportunity and came to succeed overseas. Meeting them became an inspiration and I hope to become like them when I grow up.

All six participants had a chance to stand in the spot light and perform our best. However, behind these spot lights are shadows that helped us shine. We were supported by many, and thanks to this, we saw, learned and felt many things. Thank you all very much for this chance. There are so many things we need to do for our own future and the future of Tohoku and I intend to do my very best.