

**Chapter
3**

Evaluations

1 Evaluation by the Administrator

NAKADA Masakazu

Coordinator for International Affairs, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan

Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the international youth exchange programs of the Cabinet Office were coordinated via online exchanges, but for the Ship for World Youth Program (SWY), a hybrid format was used in SWY Hybrid (FY2022) that combined face-to-face exchanges with the invited overseas youth, and in SWY2024, the program was organized by visiting various regions in Japan while the Japanese and overseas youth lived together on board the Nippon Maru.

Japanese Participating Youth (JPY) and Overseas Participating Youth (OPY) from 13 countries first gathered at a hotel in Narita City in Chiba Prefecture, and together the inauguration ceremony and onshore training were conducted. The operations afterwards on board the ship were implemented in collaboration with local governments and other organizations in response to the “Review Meeting Report on the State of International Youth Exchange Programs” of July 2022, and we entered several regions in Japan not only to implement Local Visit Program, but also to have Participating Youth (PY) work together to solve local issues through the concept of Local Practical Program for the 23-day schedule across the 3 Ports of Call in Kyoto Prefecture (Maizuru Port), Hyogo Prefecture (Sumoto Port and Port of Kobe), and Kochi Prefecture (Port of Kochi). I would like to once again express my gratitude to the local committee members and the many other parties involved in the reception of SWY. Further, I also wish to thank Captain Mr. UCHIDA and the Nippon Maru crew for their numerous contributions.

This time SWY departed from the Port of Tokyo on January 29, traveling northward on the side of the Pacific Ocean, then passing through the Tsugaru Strait from the Sanriku Coast into the Sea of Japan. When sailing by the coast of the Noto Peninsula, we observed a moment of silence for those who lost their lives in the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake, and shared our condolences for those affected by the disaster. Before departing, there were concerns that the waters in the Sea of Japan during the winter would be rough, and although some of PYs suffered from seasickness, the ship carrying us was able to proceed through calm waters and docked on schedule at Maizuru Port of Kyoto. PYs were divided into groups when visiting “Kyoto by the Sea,” the seven cities and

towns in the northern part of Kyoto Prefecture and were able to experience an atmosphere different from that of the typical world-renowned Kyoto, and I believe they all had a meaningful time through the unique experiences and exchange activities in each of the cities and towns they visited. Particularly for OPYs, they were able to observe the diversity of the various regions within Japan.

We then departed from Maizuru Port of Kyoto, seen off by prefectural and municipal officials as well as local committee members who illuminated candles using the candle shades designed by PYs themselves on the day of their arrival. Continuing on the calm voyage, we then passed through the Kanmon Straits, sailed through the Seto Inland Sea, and then entered Sumoto Port in Hyogo Prefecture. Afterwards we arrived on Awaji Island by tender boat, and as the birth of the nation is said to have been from the island, PYs then experienced Japanese mythology and traditions under the theme of “Origin” at Izanagi Shrine and the Awaji Puppet Theatre, and also learned about disasters at the Hokudan Earthquake Memorial Park Nojima Fault Preservation Museum. These experiences have certainly been etched into the minds of PYs through their many opportunities to reflect and share while on board the ship.

Afterwards, we entered the Port of Kochi, and engaged in Local Practical Program for the first time in this program while visiting various areas within Kochi Prefecture. In addition to visiting various facilities for each theme of the Course Discussions and exchanging views in a proactive and constructive manner, PYs also interacted with those younger than them, such as the local students, and held discussions on local issues, deeply involving themselves into the situation and challenges of Kochi Prefecture. At the same time, this experience also provided an opportunity for the local people and the local committee members who hosted us to engage with the beliefs and perspectives of PYs, especially those from overseas, and I believe this to have led to many insights and learnings for both sides. As a first time for Local Practical Program, there are undoubtedly many things with which still need additional work for the future development of the program, but I believe that the truly dedicated efforts of the local committee members, as well as the many other stakeholders and volunteers, together with the positive involvement of

both the facilitators and PYs of each course, led to a greatly successful outcome.

Of course, in addition to these activities, PYs also spent every spare moment they had night and day with each other throughout the voyage of the ship. Although coming from different countries, cultures, and customs, the youth of the same generation engaged with one another in everything from casual conversation to seminars and discussions tailored to their expertise and chosen themes, as well as cultural exchanges involving language, dance, songs, and other activities. Under the slogan of, “ONE Ship, MANY Journeys, ENDLESS Connection,” many exchange activities geared towards shaping the future were conducted with creativity and ingenuity within the special

environment of the ship, a unique experience shared exclusively by PYs.

Lastly, for PYs, I think that there were more experiences and interactions than they could have processed during the short time they were on board, but I would like to conclude by expressing my hope that they will, from time to time, reflect on the meaning of what they felt and experienced through this program, and to broaden and deepen their network together not only with their peers of the same batch but also as members of the greater SWY family with its long history, and that they will continue to take an active role in their respective fields, local communities, countries, and in the international community. Keep SWYing!

2 Evaluation by National Leaders

(1) Ireland

National Leader

I am honored to present my impression of participating in the Ship for World Youth (SWY) Program 2024. Ireland’s inaugural involvement in this esteemed program has been an extraordinary journey, one that we are deeply grateful for. As the National Leader (NL) entrusted with representing Ireland, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Japanese Government for extending this invitation to our island and for orchestrating a truly remarkable program.

SWY2024 marked a significant milestone, being the first edition of the program held aboard the Nippon Maru since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. I commend the efforts of the administrative team in ensuring compliance with public health protocols, prioritizing the well-being of all participants. Their dedication and vigilance allowed us to engage fully in the program’s offerings, fostering meaningful exchanges and connections despite the challenges that may have been posed by an outbreak of infectious disease. It truly felt like a post-pandemic world.

The success of SWY2024 would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of the organizers, staff, and volunteers. Their tireless efforts to facilitate discussions, seminars, and cultural exchanges have enriched our understanding of global issues and equipped us with invaluable insights into the pressing challenges facing humanity today.

The Cabinet Office staff showed incredible commitment to ensuring the program was a success. It is no easy feat to

organize a program of this scale and complexity but the officials from the Cabinet Office always showed humanity, respect, and attentiveness when engaging with the NLs to address issues as they arose.

I wish to also extend appreciation to the Center for International Youth Exchange (CENTERYE) for their invaluable assistance throughout the program. Despite the challenges of organizing the initial online components, including coordinating with 14 countries across different time zones and varying levels of familiarity with the SWY, their efforts were seamlessly executed. As a NL, I found great comfort in communicating with the Admin team, who promptly addressed any inquiries or concerns I came across during the face-to-face program in Japan.

I would like to extend particular thanks to the Local Committee members and volunteers who supported the Port of Call Activities. They warmly welcomed us and shared the beauty and richness of Japanese culture during our visits to Kyoto Prefecture, Hyogo Prefecture, and Kochi Prefecture. Their hospitality has left an indelible impression on us, broadening our perspectives and showcased the amazing capacity of the Japanese people to combine the traditional with the modern to create beauty in their environments.

Throughout the program, each NL, and Participating Youth (PY) was tasked with delving into Course Discussion topics encompassing a diverse array of themes relevant

to our collective future. These discussions culminated in Local Practical Program in Kochi Prefecture, where we had the opportunity to engage with local communities and contribute to solutions to challenges identified during our sessions.

My experience in Kochi Prefecture stood out as the pinnacle of my time in Japan. The meticulous effort, genuine care, and dedication displayed by the people of Kochi Prefecture in preparing for our visit left a profound impression on me. Moreover, the local customs and practices we were privileged to witness will remain etched in my memory for years to come.

As first-time participants, I underestimated the profound impact and significance of the SWY. The dedication and preparation of fellow delegations who had previously taken part in the program has highlighted areas where we can enhance our participation in the future. To address this, the Irish delegation is committed to finding a way of supporting any future Irish delegations to ensure they are adequately prepared and maximize their experience. I believe the organizers of the program and delegations with knowledge of the SWY should emphasize the effort that delegations typically go to in preparing for the trip to support less-experienced delegations.

One aspect of the program that surprised me was the introspective journey it led me on, prompting questions about my identity and connection to my island. Throughout the Irish delegation, there were numerous instances where we found ourselves reflecting inwardly and pondering our own sense of self. Interacting with individuals who had limited knowledge of our backgrounds compelled us to address gaps in our own self-perception. This experience not only challenged us to present ourselves to others but also encouraged us to deepen our understanding of ourselves

and our cultural identity. Some of us returned with more questions than answers but it marks the beginning of an exciting journey.

The SWY also presents its fair share of challenges. The days are long, discussions delve into some of humanity's most pressing issues, cultural disparities can surface, English proficiency levels vary, and PYs are often far from home with limited internet access. These factors can impose significant stress and pressure on PYs. Offering more optional components or holidays within the program could provide individuals experiencing fatigue with the chance to recharge, while still allowing eager participants to fully engage.

Nevertheless, I believe the positives outweighed the negatives. I was incredibly impressed by the dedication and contributions of the 230 PYs. Many of the young adults undergoing the exchange exhibited notable changes in behavior and perspective. They displayed increased confidence, a more nuanced understanding of global affairs, and a heightened enthusiasm for effecting change upon their return. This experience reaffirmed the profound impact of international collaboration and cultural exchange, leaving me reassured that future generations are poised to lead with wisdom and compassion.

In conclusion, I am confident that the SWY2024 has been a transformative experience for PYs, instilling a deeper appreciation for global collaboration and cultural diversity. As was made clear aboard the Nippon Maru, the program itself is just the beginning and we have the opportunity to use our learnings and connections to make real world impacts into the future. I look forward to further engagement and collaboration with the SWY and its global community in the pursuit of a more interconnected and harmonious world.

(2) Japan

National Leader

I feel very honored and privileged that I could participate in the Ship for World Youth Program 2024 as National Leader of Japan. Through this program, we learned not only the words “diversity” and “international exchange” but also what they really meant. Of course, there were difficulties in the process, but I am so grateful that I could co-create this program with all PYs, fellow NLs, administrative staffs and everyone who has been involved in this program. I sincerely thank everyone of you.

I think CD plays a significant role in this program. I got

myself involved with the discussion and realized that it gave PYs opportunities for deeper conversation based on their own interests and grew the fundamental awareness of being a global leader so that they could take what they learned in CD to their local communities. To make a program more meaningful, I suggest two things. First, we need to share the aim of CD more clearly among PYs and facilitators. I heard many PYs confused mainly because of the gap of language skills and gap of basic knowledge around the topic. It is difficult to decide how we adjust the contents of

conversation with different understanding of what is being discussed. This situation results not only the possibility of leaving someone behind, but also possibility of declining motivations of PYs who expected to have deeper and more academic conversation. If the goal of CD is challenging to engage discussions with differences including gaps of language skills and background knowledge, it is important to communicate the goal carefully. If the goal is to have deeper and academic learning, we need more specific criteria of language skills for PYs. Secondly, it is important to make a quality educational program with combination of CD onboard, and Port of Call Activities (POC). Letting these two be planned independently can lead a miscommunication of topics and loss of learning opportunities. Especially, in this year's program, we visited Kochi Prefecture for Local Practical Program. So if the learning of online exchange, onboard exchange and POC got along and worked as a comprehensive process, it would be a great opportunity to face the practical issues in local communities with the experience of discussion on the topic. I suggest combining two factors of the program, CD and POC, more strongly and thoughtfully.

I found that through Voluntary Activities (VA) and Peer-Learning Seminars (PLS), PYs could flourish their creativity and enjoyed both planning and participating in each other's events. For the first time in this year's program, we experienced both online and onboard exchanges. Thanks to the online exchange, we could start to establish the relationship for planning activities together prior to the meeting in person. On the other hands, if we could make the online exchange more active, that would help starting

the preparation of activities in the earlier stage in a deeper way. My suggestion is to create a guideline or criteria to make online exchange active; for example, planning one online activity per a delegation is required, it can be three or more for Japanese delegation and they can start planning during pre-program in summer, etc. Also, it is important to secure the spaces for VA and PLS in latter half of the program so that those PYs who enjoy the encounters to each other in person and start to come up with ideas of activity have opportunities to realize their project. Even though we had limited time onboard this year, I saw many activities with diverse creativity and skillful backgrounds of people by the end of the program and these activities made us proud of ourselves. I believe the SWY is full of precious opportunities for many PYs to make a first step and experience a small success in a warm and safe community.

Official National Presentations were not planned this year, but some of delegations did have cultural presentations in VA. I suggest having official National Presentation for every delegation because it was a great opportunity to experience different cultures and to learn the roots of identities of each delegate, who we share our enjoyable and meaningful time together as friends.

The most precious thing we bring back from the SWY is the connections beyond the different nationalities and cultures among "SWY family" members that we grew and cherished onboard. This is not only a treasure for ourselves but a treasure for a better world. I hope through each one of our efforts, this program will continue to develop for more and more meaningful learning of youth.

(3) United Arab Emirates

National Leader

The United Arab Emirates delegation is deeply honored to have participated in Ship for World Youth (SWY2024). We are grateful to the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan for creating a platform where youth from around the world are able to come together to discuss and collaborate on global issues. The emphasis on developing future leaders has created an inspiring program, which is made all the more valuable by the participation of delegates from so many different countries. We appreciate this valuable opportunity for intercultural exchange, the fostering of global, lifelong networks, and the environment of acceptance and tolerance that was present both on and off the ship.

Course Discussion (CD)

We felt the CDs were an excellent way to ensure a breadth of topics that were addressed, allowing individuals to pursue the groups that were of most interest and relevance to their broader goals. Within our delegation, we were able to participate in ten CDs, all of which provided opportunities for conversations with a diverse group of peers. These were eye-opening experiences that showcased the value of co-creation and collaboration in making a positive difference within a given field.

We enjoyed the interactivity of the CD, allowing direct engagement with group members across cultures, ages, and backgrounds. There were also opportunities for older PYs

to act as mentors to younger PYs within a group, which was a rewarding experience. The variety of brainstorming and interactive activities within the CD groups contributed to a dynamic and enjoyable experience, allowing information to be conveyed in a truly engaging way.

We also had the privilege of conducting Port of Call Activities, discovering key sites on the ground, which enhanced our practical knowledge on the topics we had been discussing. Moreover, the ability to communicate with locals from different regions in Japan allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of Japan's customs and traditions.

That said, we wish the time dedicated to the discussions that had been longer. Greater frequency of the sessions with more time for conversation would provide group members with further opportunity to develop solutions to key challenges highlighted within the discussions. We also feel the CD could have even greater effectiveness if several CDs were combined into a larger, interdisciplinary project, or perhaps if there were dedicated opportunities for interrelated CDs to have discussions together. A structured format wherein groups could interact, debate, and engage in simulations of decision-making processes with a wider audience would therefore be of immense value, enhancing leadership, negotiation, communication, and strategic thinking skills.

Additionally, given the large age range of PYs, we felt the purpose of some groups became slightly unclear, with greater emphasis on peer mentorship rather than a collective learning experience for both the older and younger PYs. Perhaps in future, CD groups that happen to have a bigger age range could be divided into two sub-themes, with one focused on youth mentorship while the other discusses more high-level strategic initiatives.

Peer-Learning Seminar (PLS) and Voluntary Activity (VA)

We admire the idea of PLS and VA; it gives more space for PYs to highlight their skills and traditions. It also created a kind of freedom and self-expression for PYs. A notable result of PLS and VA is the rapid learning of languages and tradition dances among PYs, which contributed to creating a cohesive environment among PYs.

We have a simple proposal that could contribute to better organizing of announcing these events. The suggestion is to create a group in any social media platforms to collect all announcements after the announcements part in the morning assembly. This will lead not to distracting PYs, ensuring a larger number of attendees, and organizing the

advertising process.

Intercultural Exchange

One of the most valuable elements of SWY2024 for us as a delegation has been the opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures and participate in intercultural exchange. Not only has this facilitated our own understanding of how people live globally, but it also facilitates greater tolerance and mutual respect for one another as we navigate a challenging world together. We would have loved to see greater participation from all the delegates in the Cultural Presentation, with each representative country sharing more about their languages, culture(s) and religions. Not only would this ensure equal understanding amongst the different delegations, but it would also mitigate any potential cultural shocks.

Program and Activities

We understand that we live in a post-lockdown world where hybrid meetings and programs are the norm. That said, we unfortunately found that the online component of the program – while great for flexibility – was not as immersive. The ability to fully separate ourselves from ordinary daily life in order to focus on the program is one of SWY's greatest strengths, and we found it far more engaging to be interacting with one another in person.

Overall, we were impressed by the breadth of activities that were on the agenda. These were opportunities to engage with each other while also exploring wonderful locations in Japan and learning more about local cultures. However, we did sometimes feel overwhelmed by the intensity of the schedule; more scheduled breaks to allow PYs to recharge would promote overall wellbeing and allow for greater focus.

Additionally, we were not always clear on the objectives for certain activities, and how they fit with the overall learning objectives of the program and our respective CDs. We would love to see more streamlined activities that focus on PYs' overall learning, share more Japanese success stories, and explore Japan's status as a technological pioneer.

Concluding Remarks

From cultural exchanges to insightful discussions, SWY2024 was an enjoyable and enriching experience. Every moment left a lasting impression upon us, and we are truly appreciative of the immense efforts that has taken to arrange a program of this caliber. We also look forward to what will surely be an even stronger program in the years

to come. Until then, we return to the UAE with renewed energy, excited to take our learning's and continue our

work towards building a better, more vibrant future for all.