

Supporting Friends from Around the World

1. Motivation behind Research Paper

Our research group's mission is to support refugees from feeling isolated in Japan. Additionally, since the Russia-Ukraine war, about over four million refugees are fleeing Ukraine to countries like Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, and I believe that it is our responsibility as global citizens to accept them with open arms no matter what situation they have been put in. At the beginning of second grade, my class saw various short documentaries to help us choose a research topic for the rest of our high school career. One video that caught my attention was a clip of a little girl fleeing from her own country because of a war taking place there. These children had their chances taken away from them, from playing hide and seek to watching movies in the comfort of their own home without hearing bombs going off at the end of their street.

2. Introduction

Before starting this research, I believed that this was a distant problem and I had no connection whatsoever. Nonetheless, we are determined to make the situation better even if it is a small achievement. We only have only a few months until we graduate, but I hope that this research can help us by giving us the ability to further our research and take action ourselves.

The first task was to search for information to find out more about this problem. Since this is a lesser known topic in Japan, it was difficult for us to find any websites or resources that would help us with our groundwork.

What we found out was that there was no official definition for the word “refugee”. However, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.” (UNHCR, 2022). As stated by The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, in the UK, asylum applications (application for international protection) receiving a grant rose to a record-high of 72% last year (The Migration Observatory, 2022). In Japan, reported by the Japan Association for Refugees, out of 2,413 people who applied for Refugee Status in 2021, only 74 people were accepted (Japan Association for Refugees), which is only 30% of people who were granted to get the support that they need. Japanese people may feel as though this is not an immediate problem, but I feel this is something that needs to be resolved.

3. Results and Analysis

To think of a solution, first, we had to bring awareness to this situation. Therefore, we went to Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University to find more information and expand our research. This university is located in Oita Prefecture and nearly half of the faculties are non-Japanese, coming from 26 countries. We asked them if they as college professors had any chance to meet refugees, what kind of image or impression they had, or what they thought of the problem that is currently happening, which is refugees getting discriminated against and being left out.

In this interview, the professor spoke about a stateless student who came to the school a few years back. According to the UNHCR website, the legal definition of a stateless person is “a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law”. Her parents were both refugees and in the middle of applying for an Immigrant Visa, as a result, not having the chance to acquire a nationality. Generally, without a nationality, people are not able to legally go in or stay in countries. In addition, they will not be able to apply for public health, education and so much more that support immigrants to have a “normal” life henceforward. However, to get into Japan, the student studied diligently to attain funding from the government and have a chance to get accepted into Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University.

I have learned that not only does being a refugee affect adults, it also affects the children greatly, which is why I decided to try and find a way to support them. First, I looked at Germany's way of supporting refugees. In 1990, since they used to take in refugees from the former country Yugoslavia during war, Germany had many support groups and non-profit organisations to look up to. That's where I found an organisation that caught my attention. This organisation makes picture books that make it easy to learn different languages and cultures for children who are not able to get the education they need. So, I decided to make a picture book myself and donate them to nearby public facilities, non-profit organisations and the city hall for refugees arriving in Japan. To make the book understandable for everyone, I decided to make the book in both Japanese and English.

I started off by taking part in a translation seminar from Kobe College. That's where I learned the difference between interpretation and translation. At this seminar, we learned that translation means to not only transcribe the words, but also

include emotions and thoughts into the sentences. During this seminar, I truly felt that there is a big impact in what you say, and one small difference can either hurt them or cheer them up. The picture book starts off with a boy named “Leo” who ran away from his home country with his family to Japan. Here, he learns about Japanese culture and realises that many people around him are willing to support and be kind to them, even though they look different and have different backgrounds. Our message that we advocate to the readers is “Even though the world is big and there are lots and lots of people, there will ALWAYS be someone who thinks that you are important.”

By continuing this research, I was able to reach one of the goals “Spread awareness and Share Knowledge” by participating in the School Global Studies Result Presentation. My team got chosen to be the representative of our group and had the opportunity to bring awareness to this situation and tell the story of struggling immigrants. Even though this school is only a small community of many more, being able to bring light to this problem was a big achievement for us. We were given lots of advice and positive comments from students. It feels lonely arriving in a country that you barely know anything about and starting a new life. That is why I hope this picture book can make people feel more welcome and supported.

4. Conclusion and Future Problems

The Kakaco Family faces three big challenges. First, we have to complete the picture book. Currently, we only have about one third of the Japanese version done, so finishing the Japanese version and the English version quickly can lead us to the next task. The second challenge is finding and contacting organisations that will help support our mission. Currently, we only have one location that will set up our book

which is our school library, however, that isn't enough to be able to support them, which is why we need to expand our connections. Finally and most importantly, from supporting non-profit organisations to spreading awareness yourself, we as students need to take this problem into our own hands and get involved for a sustainable solution.

5. Reflection

The percentage of immigrants here in Japan is low. However, we still need to support the few who need it, have the ability to fund and assist them and have more compassion towards them.

6. Work Cited

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