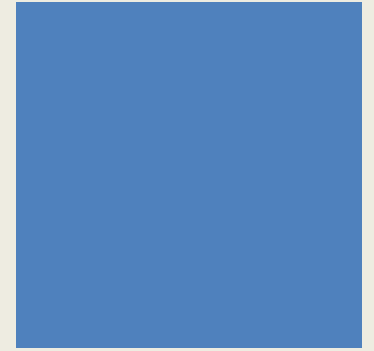




AAEE Newsletter 13

NEPAL JAPAN EXCHANGE PROGRAM

BRIEF INTRODUCTION



Nepal Japan Exchange program is the cultural exchange program that was organized by Asia Association of Education and Exchange. It was a 10 days cultural exchange program beginning from 18th August 2016 to 26th August 2016. The total number of participants in the program was 21 with 8 Nepali members and 13 Japanese members. During the exchange program, participants visited places of Nepal such as Kathmandu, Palpa, Maidan and Pokhara. The exchange program gave insight to several places which had socio-cultural and economic significance. Participants got to learn about the typical rural Nepali life and contrast with the mainstream city lives that they are living. The program was also aimed towards understanding and accepting the cultural differences that participants from both countries had and knowing more about each other.



BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Overall, the program was a learning experience along with the enjoyment that created life long memories. However, the main objective of this program is the exchange of culture between the students of Japan and Nepal.



Expectations Before the Program



The Nepal Japan student exchange program was a great learning experience in terms of cultural exchange and learning new values. Preceding the program, we were much eager to share our own culture on the grounds that we had been preparing for the cultural performances. We were also very thrilled to welcome the Japanese members as we had been communicating through social media. Everyone seemed very friendly and greatly gifted. We were sure that we would establish a friendly bond and get along with each one of them effortlessly. They had been involved in one or the other social projects in Japan and some of them had also contributed to the development projects in Nepal. All the student members were very young and enthusiastic about the rural communities of Nepal. They were interested in education and most of them wanted to inquire and examine about the teaching and learning systems in Nepal.



Expectations Before the Program

It is a matter of fact that Japan is one of the most developed countries in the world. Nepal is much different in terms of physical geography, culture and diversity. Though we might share the same continent, our social norms and values vary widely. We were a little worried about the laid back and slow Nepali culture compared to the disciplined and punctual Japanese lifestyle. We wanted to be as professional and disciplined as they were and learn from their behavior. In this case, we were actually able to learn more than self-discipline. We were able to learn to appreciate the beauty in each moment and over and above to be more expressive. Due to their keen and friendly nature, we believed that in spite of the difficulties in rural village, they would be able to adapt and relish it there. It was astonishing how the student members not only stood up to this expectation but found the experience to be one of the most exciting and mind-altering events in their life.



Expectations Before the Program



According to our itinerary, we serving people of the village by bringing drastic changes in the ehad to spend 3 days in Maidan village of Arghakhanchi district. This is the same village where “Okay Baji”, Japanese native spent his prior years ducation of the place. This was one of the main reasons we were fervent to meet him and experience Maidan village. We were much honored and humbled to meet this great persona.

To conclude, not only were our expectations met but they were exceeded by the ever cheerful and enthusiastic Japanese members. The program was very successful in delivering its objectives and living up to its standards.



DAILY DIARY

Day1-August 17



Nepal Japan Exchange Program officially started with the Nepalese people going to the airport to receive the Japanese members. This day after short rest Japanese members walked around Thamel and near to Basantapur Durbar square in the evening along with program co-coordinator.

Day2-August 18

On this day, we played ice breaking game to introduce ourselves. Through this game we got to know each other better. Then we went for our next program that was dance movement therapy. It was our first experience so it was a very memorable time. It really helped to create a bond between one another. After that all of us went to visit swayambhunath temple. We all enjoyed the monuments and the vibration of that place.

DAILY DIARY

<First day of Heal>

Definitely excited for the day we all were having lots of fun in ice-breaking sections. With two lies about me and one truth I was also enjoying the guessing game. Big cheerful smile was constant in everyone's face yet in the heart we all knew we needed to know each other better. Moreover we wanted to know each other better so that these 10 days of journey of togetherness would be a lifetime treasure.



We reached to the hall in Baneshwor at 11 a.m. where we would be having our Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) session. I had been hearing about it a lot from different people but actually being a part of it was something I was looking forward to and I was particularly excited about it because I had heard about the way it can heal and let one's emotion flow through the medium of dance. Anyway with the real quick introduction with our instructor session begun.

DAILY DIARY

<First day of Heal>



Step by step, more after each session like newspaper segment, balloon segment, ribbon segment things were getting more interesting and fun. We could feel that the music and dance along with the song was making us feel lighter, free and in some way happier. Due to all the group activities together suddenly, we all both Japanese and Nepalese participants became closer to each other

The activities that we did made all of us feel that to be happy to be free at the moment you don't need technology, tools rather happiness can come from within. The props we used were something we would play when we were a child like newspapers, balloons, ribbons but playing them again somehow raised the happiness within ourselves. At the end of 2 hours of session we were tired yet with big smile on our faces and feeling close to not just each other but close to oneself more than ever.

DAILY DIARY

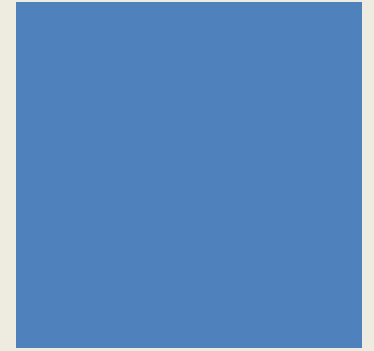
Day3-August 19

This day we headed for Palpa. We spent this entire day on the bus interacting with one another. We reached Palpa in the evening. After that we had our dinner and enjoyed the scenery of Palpa from our rooftop.



DAILY DIARY

<Days full of new experiences >



Long Journey to Palpa became interesting with beautiful sceneries and never ending conversations. Twinkling lights from the houses at hills in Palpa made it worth it to travel up to there. The beautiful view and the freshness of wind at night made everyone more energetic and lively. Secrets shared and conversations done after that is memories and lesson learnt for life. Other few days at the village is something very special for everyone.



That unforgettable interaction with local people, taste of authentic Nepali food, living typical village life, bonding with children there and satisfying star watching at night is something that has affected everyone one way or another. One of the main highlight of the days in Palpa was the Japanese 'koinobori' painting that children did. Every student seemed to be highly interested in the painting while teachers seemed to be proud of the opportunities their students got. Another interesting event that took place was putting 'henna' to Japanese members. It took them close to Nepali culture that is trending these days.

DAILY DIARY

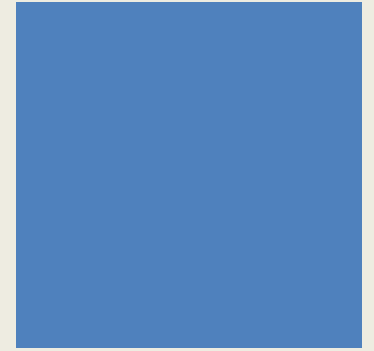
<Days full of new experiences >

There was a perfect balance of give and take of surprises and experiences between our team and the villagers. Cultural differences among one another were easy to adjust with as the days went by. The Kindness of the villagers and homely environment was that main thing that made everyone happy.



DAILY DIARY

Day4-August 20



It was a very memorable day because we could finally meet OK Baji. We had a very good conversation with him. Ok Baji shared his experience with us and inspired us too. After that we left Tansen and moved towards Maidan village. We had a very warm welcome from the villagers. Japanese members enjoyed the company of children a lot.



Day5-August 21

The main highlight of this day was the Koinobori painting. It was a very fun filled day because we had a lot of fun while painting with the students and teachers as well. Students there had a very new experience.

DAILY DIARY

Day6-August 22

It was one of the most memorable days since one of the Japanese member had her birthday so we celebrated her birthday in typical Nepali style along with dance and music. Then after we went to a ground, sat around and had the meat of pig and then we sang and danced and had a lot of fun.

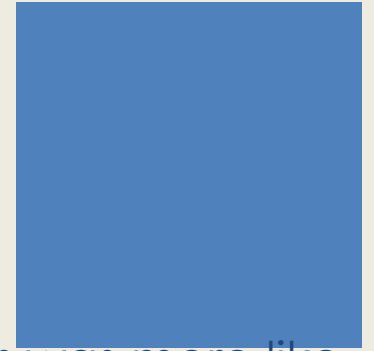


Day7-August 23

It was the day to leave Maidan village. Nobody wanted to go so soon but we had to. Farewell and thank you speech from villagers was really touching. After a very long ride, we reached to Pokhara quite late.

DAILY DIARY

<Days full of enjoyment>



Leaving Maidan and travelling to Pokhara with lots of memories was more like 'See you again' than goodbye forever. Everybody got little emotional while leaving their host family. Thank you speech and farewell ceremony from the side of villagers was really special.

After travelling for few hours we finally reached Pokhara. The vibration of the city was welcoming as always. That evening we had Japanese food for dinner. Perfect sitting arrangements, beautiful candle light, delicious taste of Japanese food and our never ending conversations made the evening very relaxing and prepared us for the upcoming day's program activities.



DAILY DIARY

<Days full of enjoyment>

Next morning we visited Sarangkot. Beautiful view of sunrise, Himalayas and lake made everyone happy. Everyone got busy taking pictures of the sceneries and enjoying the view of Pokhara. Next activity took place at shamrock school. Students of the school and our team members played different sports together. It was a fun time with the school students. Another highlight of the day after sports activity at shamrock is the press conference where information about AAEE and the activities it has done was highlighted. It was a very new experience for most of us.

Next morning's main activity was farewell program at Shamrock school. Thank you speech and gifts was exchanged between both our team members and the school students. After that we left for Kathmandu.



DAILY DIARY

Day 8 -August 24

We woke up very early and then we went to sarangkot to enjoy the beautiful view of sunrise. It was very fine morning. We clicked a lot of pictures and enjoyed the sunrise view. After that we spent our time with the kids of shamrock school. We played skipping and football with the students and had a lot of fun. After that we went for the Press conference where we discussed about the contribution of AAEE and cultural exchange program.

Day9-August 25

The kids of shamrock school gave us a very sweet farewell. We exchanged gifts and thank you speech and then we left for Kathmandu. We reached our hotel and took rest.



DAILY DIARY

Day10-August 26

We went to botanical garden and had a very good time there. Nepali participants surprised Japanese member by giving them a performance on a very popular Japanese song. After that we came back to Thamel and had a little shopping and then had our final dinner.



Day11-August 27

Today was the very last day of program. First we visited to Pashupati Nath Temple and then left for airport. Everyone was very sad because it was the time to say goodbye. So everyone was full of tears and was very hard to say goodbye but we exchanged out message cards and bid goodbye to all Japanese members.

DAILY DIARY

<Memories of the last day>

Upon coming back to Kathmandu, all of us were a bit sad as we knew our time of togetherness was about to end. For the last day of program, we went to Botanical Garden. Lost between the natural beauty, greenery and peace we were enjoying our dry picnic. We talked about several topics, took lots and lots of selfies. Oh Yes! The surprise Japanese dance that Nepalese participants performed gave a really big smile on the faces of everyone. After spending a beautiful day at Botanical Garden we came back to hotel and got busy for respective shopping.

The last dinner together was filled with joy. That night we weren't in mood for emotional and sad conversation so we were simply living the moment and laughing till our stomach hurts. By the time we were back to hotel it was already near to 10:00pm but no one was really in mood for sleeping. Till very late we were having conversations and also we were writing messages to each other on the message card.



DAILY DIARY

<Memories of the last day>

Nobody was willing to think about the following day where we would return to our regular lives. We were living by the lines “Save best for the last” at that moment.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

People say, “Travelling is the best education because we can see the world through different ways and realize our community or country isn’t the only reality, there’s many”. This statement came so true to both Japanese and Nepalese student during our 10 days “Mero Sathi” cultural exchange program. Nepal-Japan exchange program was organized by AAEE foundation from Aug 18- Aug26, 2016. The whole program was beneficial for students from both countries.

We learned many new things and also realize many things which were impossible for us to learn and realize on our own. The things that we learn will not only help in our academic but also in our personal life. This program made us realize how thankful we should be and raised a question within ourselves that how we can contribute to our country as well as to the world.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

One thing we really learned is punctuality. It was something that taught us that if we can't change the circumstances around us maybe we can change ourselves a bit to circumstances. And this all made us more punctual. While visiting the different places with Japanese students, we Nepalese students realized that we neglect so much of things around us because we have been used to it. But as Japanese students questioned or pointed out something and as we go on describing we realized its importance and how we have been neglecting. We met OK Baji at Palpa, whose life experience and work inspired so many of us. The meet and greet with OK Baji was so inspirational and motivational. It was really an honor to meet such person who have done so many things for Nepal and is still doing.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

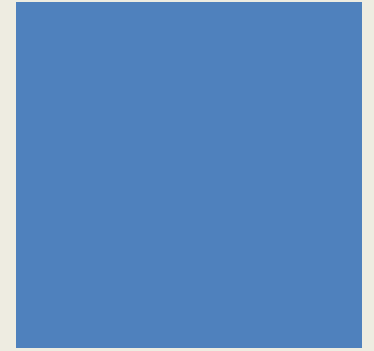
From Palpa we traveled to Maidan, a village dominated by Magar people in Palpa district. Maidan was not only new to Japanese but it was new to Nepalese students as well. The majority of things that we learned from the tour come from this village. When we reached there, school students were all wearing school dress and many villagers were also gathered there to welcome us. The welcome we received from the students and villagers was something unforgettable.

For three nights and four days we stayed at the village. The major topic that we talked and discussed was that, “does having every facility makes a person happy?” well many Japanese students talked about having every facilities needed but still people are unhappy. Whereas, villagers talked about how they wished to have more and good facilities.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?



One of the common question from Japanese students while staying in Maidan was, “how can be villagers and children are so loving, caring and friendly although we are total strangers from different country?” for which many villagers answered with a question, “do loving and caring someone needs a reason?” well it is true that we shouldn't need reason to love someone as well treating guest as god is what our culture has taught us.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

During our stay at Maidan, we talked about geographical, cultural and political situations of both countries as well as discussed about various reasons that has been hindering the development of our country. Not only that we discussed about the gender issues, how female are considered incompetent to men, how sons are more preferred and talked about our patriarchal society. But to our surprise that Japanese students also told us about how boys are preferred in some cases even in japan. It was a new thing to us because when we think of developed countries we have our pre assumption that in developed countries women are no less than men and they are treated equally.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

As we stayed at Maidan for four days it was surprising to see how Japanese students were interacting with children and villagers without Nepalese students support. It taught us that you don't always need to know the language for communication. Gestures and smiles also convey messages and feelings well to another person.

Also, we found that Japanese students really enjoyed the nature scenery which made us feel that it is really important to conserve and preserve the nature. Many prejudice and misconception of both Nepalese and Japanese students about the rural village were cleared. Villagers and children seemed happy and they were always smiling but inside everyone longs for the things they don't possess such as good hospitals nearby, good schools, easy transportations and so on.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

Overall, the program was successful and we learned many things through different activities too such as we did DMT (dance movement therapy) on the second day at Kathmandu which taught was dance isn't just danced. It connects people as well as it helps to relieve stress. At Pokhara we played with students from shamrock school which was so much fun and learned about teamwork. OK Baji's story taught us that it's never too late to start something good as he started to work for Nepal after his retirement. He also told us about his struggles which eventually taught us that it may take time but if we strive and struggle then for sure result will be positive. Learning isn't just done in classroom we can learn much more if we travel. We all students both Japanese and Nepalese travelled together and learned so many things about Nepal. Although none of the Nepalese students have been to japan we learned about some culture and lifestyle through interactions.



DAILY DIARY

What did we learn from the exchange program?

The whole program has broadened our knowledge about both countries and things we learned from this program will be helpful for rest of our lives. It was a beautiful experience, we made wonderful memories and most importantly we met friends from another part of the world.



DAILY DIARY

Conclusion and recommendation



Program in overall was a really good and unforgettable experience for all of us. Culture exchange programs like this are trending now a day and hold a lot of significance. Especially for youth like us it is very essential in order to come closer to other side of the world. From this program we learned various things about Japan and Japanese culture and also our own country's geography, culture and way of life of rural people. It was a lifelong memorable experience for us as we learned so many things and made new friends. We all thank AAEE for organizing this exchange program and giving us the opportunity to be a part of it and also we would like to thank all the Japanese student participants for being cooperative and making this journey successful together.

DAILY DIARY

Conclusion and recommendation

Everything went really well but the only thing is that since the exchange program was held in Nepal there was more exploring and learning for Japanese participants as compared to Nepali students. We hope someday the same exchange program can be held in Japan itself. Despite of that the journey has been wonderful for all of us. Thank You!



CONCLUSION

To Celebrate new friendships and learn from one another

Ten days in beautiful places of Nepal with twenty one enthusiastic learners was one noteworthy event. It was a great experience for both the nationalities.

NJEP became a platform for everyone where they could realize and practice the hidden skills they had in them. Some learnt to express themselves better while some learnt new culture and language. Difference in the personality of the participants is the one thing in itself from which everyone could learn from one another. It was an opportunity to rejoice our own culture while simultaneously learning another culture.





NJEP is a complete package of experiences and fun learning opportunities. Every activity that was performed meant to exchange culture, ideas, views and opinion between the students. Each activity affected participants in different way. Everybody could experience and learn something out of everything that happened during NJEP.

Apart from the exchange of culture and information's exchanged a very important highlight of NJEP is the making of new friendships. The environment of NJEP august, 2016 was so vibrant. Every participant of both countries got so connected with one another. The level of comfort they shared was the core reason of the success of the program. All the participants were lively and contributed to program according to their ability

but it was the feeling of togetherness among participants that helped the program to be productive. Strangers became friends, imaginations turned into reality, places were visited, memories were made, friendship was celebrated, ideas were shared, wisdom was enhanced and lessons were learnt. This is what NJEP august, 2016 was about.