

MISSION REPORT

December 4th - 15th

2023



Social Entrepreneurship
Empowerment Development

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Message from GOROM Association

I am pleased to announce that our Social Entrepreneurship Empowerment Development (SEED) program, which strengthens the youth partnership between Latin America and Japan, has been successfully conducted.

The SEED program started in 2022 and is now in its second year, and received positive comments from the producers and key stakeholders about the quality of proposals presented by the students. The program is made possible through the active cooperation of universities, public and private institutions, and NGOs. We are striving toward the goal of providing opportunities for university students to achieve regional revitalization by providing innovative recommendations and solutions in a practical manner.

Starting in June of 2023, university students from Japan and Latin America worked together on the theme of "regional revitalization" and "industrial revitalization" in Yamanashi Prefecture, and prepared various solutions to improve the social issues through research and presentations. For five months online, the students worked in groups on the traditional crafts and main products of Yamanashi Prefecture. As a culmination of their research, they visited Yamanashi Prefecture on a tour to present their results. In order to maximize social entrepreneurship, we have upgraded our agenda, adding interactive dialogues with various professionals that inspired the students to improve their viewpoints and thoughts. Through the experience of the Study Tour in Japan, students developed entrepreneurial thinking and leadership to solve problems within a cross-cultural working environment.

I have a strong confidence that the SEED program, which deepens the friendship between Japan and Latin America, is made possible by the cooperation of many people. It has been evolving through the active participation of various stakeholders with the coordination of GOROM Association staff members. I am looking forward to working continuously to deepen our ties through the SEED program.



Goro Mitsuura
Representative Director
GOROM Association

Message from Professors of Partner Universities



Fausto García
Associate Professor
at Austral University, Argentina

I am both pleased and proud to have participated in the 2023 SEED Program on behalf of Austral University. It is programs like this one that contribute to our interest in developing lasting human bonds among professors, students, and institutions from Latin America and Japan, that will allow for a strengthening of our countries' relationships. People coming from different disciplines and different backgrounds, all working together as one. Austral University extends its gratitude for GOROM Association's ongoing support.

The participation of FAAP students in the SEED Program enshrines a learning process mainly focused on professional practice, in which all participants have the opportunity to test skills that will be crucial for their careers. The interaction between Brazilian and Japanese students during the previous online sessions, followed by an intense study tour, allowed for a strong assimilation of cultural values and expanded the knowledge bases that will enable the strengthening of commercial ties between the two societies, contributing to mutual progress and multiple benefits.



Helio Michelini Pellaes Neto
Professor at FAAP University, Brazil



Alexandre Ratsuo Uehara
Professor & Academic Coordinator
at ESPM College, Brazil

The 2023 SEED Program allowed ESPM students to apply what they had learned in class in a practical setting and gave them the chance to research and learn about the sectors they were working on, as well as the Japanese economy and culture. On behalf of ESPM, I would like to thank GOROM Association for this opportunity, and for recognizing that ESPM students bring significant value to the multicultural and international setting fostered by this Program.

Message from Professors of Partner Universities



Juan Carlos Díaz Vásquez
Associate Professor
at EAFIT University, Colombia

This has been the second year of EAFIT University's involvement with the SEED Program, which has provided a strong framework to build and expand our relationship. The program is catching the attention of a broader range of students coming from different disciplines, all of them interested in social entrepreneurship and global leadership. We want to highlight the great opportunity it means for EAFIT students to participate in the program and enhance their professional careers.

Participating in the SEED Program is a key opportunity for Los Andes University students to develop skills for their future professional careers by engaging in social entrepreneurship projects and gaining practical experience in addressing social and economic issues. The program's multicultural environment encourages an entrepreneurial spirit, social awareness, and civic responsibility that Los Andes University so keenly instills in its students, preparing them to be responsible leaders and effective professionals in an interconnected world.



Ricardo Peña
Associate Professor
at Los Andes University, Colombia



SEED Participants in Certificate Event

Day 1: December 4th

Visit to the Yamanashi Jewelry Museum and the To Labo store

Members of the jewelry team, accompanied by Professors Juan Carlos Díaz Vásquez and Fausto García, and GOROM Association representatives, visited the Yamanashi Jewelry Museum and the To Labo store, on December 4th. These visits allowed students to gain first-hand experience and obtain deeper insights into the jewelry industry in Yamanashi.



Tradition. Yamanashi Prefecture's jewelry industry is said to have begun in the Edo Period (1603-1867) when high-quality rock crystals were mined there, and polishing techniques were introduced to the region. Yamanashi's jewelry industry is focused in polishing, metal work, and stone and crystal carving. The Yamanashi jewelry industry characterizes itself for their traditional techniques, preserved through time. The precious stones are handcrafted, which enables the producer to create diverse and smooth shapes. Moreover, the polishing is done with a horizontal machine, rather than a vertical one, to complement the crafting by hand. Despite the growth in production machines that enables an increase in the production volume, Yamanashi's companies continue using traditional production methods.

Market Adaptation and Society. In order to survive in the market, these companies innovate through their designs. It is important for producers to understand the needs and likes of the consumer. The museum curator explained that around 2000 producers are based in Yamanashi, but only a few will survive, given the aging population.

Day 1: December 4th

Visit to the Yamanashi Jewelry Museum and the To Labo store

To solve this, an interesting aspect the curator explained was what the jewelry team called “the lifecycle of jewelry”. Producers need to teach kids about jewelry, if they want to receive government aid. Through the museum, kids discover jewelry, and get inspired to pursue a college degree in jewelry to preserve the tradition.



To Labo. After the museum, the team visited To Labo, the producer’s store. There, they were able to closely observe the jewelry pieces, as well as the intricate techniques used to produce them. The seen designs are extremely thoughtful and have intelligent ergonomics, which is a point the team worked on with the producer. Furthermore, it was possible for the team to get to know the producer better, such as learning about his motivations, dedication, and working methods. Afterwards, a workshop was conducted where the team polished the gems and experienced the delicate and attention-demanding nature of the work. This added significant value to the craftsmanship, highlighting its uniqueness.

Uniqueness. Finally, the theme of uniqueness was the main takeaway from all the visits and information acquired by the group. It was a point that connected the lessons demonstrated by the museum regarding jewelry production, highlighting that regardless of where the gems come from, the applied Yamanashi technique is the market differentiator. This could be reflected in To Labo's earring exposition. Despite featuring the same gem, color, and style, each piece was different due to the ancient handcrafted technique specific to Yamanashi. Even though machines can offer a larger and faster production flow, ensuring perfect and equal precision of each gem, the handcraft factor does not, and that is the uniqueness that each person should receive.

Day 1: December 4th

Shirayuri Winery (L'Orient)

The wine team visited the Shirayuri Winery, also known as L'Orient, in the Kosshu Valley, an area known for producing internationally acclaimed wines. There, the team met with Mr. Keiya Uchida, the general manager of the winery and the youngest of three generations of owners.



After arriving at the winery, an introductory meeting was held, in which the producer answered questions made by the students on various topics, such as annual production and exportation experience. During this meeting, students were also made aware of the sustainable practices L'Orient implements, especially in relation to waste management. For instance, after using the grape for wine making, the peel and any other residues are used in the production of brandy and gin.

Afterwards, Mr. Uchida took the team to see the grape crops, where they tasted *koshū*, *shine muscat* and *chardonnay* grapes. During this process the students learned about the process of making, selling and exporting wine. Later on, Mr. Uchida invited the group to taste different types of infused gin in the winery's lab. The insights gained by the wine team allowed them to think about new ways to connect Japanese wines with the Latin American market, especially to create a more personalized and tailored marketing approach for Argentina, Brazil and Colombia. An example of this is choosing which wines would pair better with each local cuisine instead of exporting the same wines to the three countries,

Moreover, Mr. Uchida shared his thoughts on entering the Latin American market with the wine team, commenting on the number of wine bottles already being exported worldwide and the plan for increasing exportations from 5% of the whole production to 10% in the short term and 20% in the long term, with Latin America as an important market for that growth. Also, meeting with Latin Americans brought new insights to Mr. Uchida, such as the possibility of exporting not only wine but gin and brandy as well.

In the end, students suggested that the best country for initially entering the Latin American market is Brazil, as it has the biggest Japanese community outside of Japan, has a high wine consumption rate, and does not have much local competition.

Taikan Shuzo Sake Brewery Factory

The Sake team visited the producer they had been working with: Taikan Shuzo, a Sake brewery in Minami-Alps city. There, they were welcomed by Mr. Osawa, owner of the brewery. During the visit, Mr. Osawa gave the team a tour around the facility and explained the process of making Sake.

Step after step, participants were introduced to the different stages through which raw materials are exposed to in order to achieve the final product, as well as to the machines used during this process. From the moment the Yamadanishiki -the rice used by Taikan Shuzo for their Sake- is washed for the first time, going through the polishing, steeping, steaming, drying, all the way to the fermenting stage induced by mixing the rice with the Kōji mold and other ingredients that vary from producer to producer, and the pressing of the rice to squeeze the liquid out, participants earned a first-hand experience into the sake making process and many of its intricacies. Also, it is worth to mention that Mr. Osawa gave participants tasting samples of the product in its different stages before doing an actual tasting of the bottled Sakes.



Even after having done so much research into the world of Sake, students were amazed by the amount of effort, time and cultural richness the production of a single bottle of Sake implied. By seeing it in person, the team better understood the process of producing Sake, allowing them to express and communicate about it more accurately in their presentation, enhancing the added value that Taikan Shuzo Sake has. As for the Latin American market, the team saw in this an opportunity to offer not only a mere bottle of Sake, but an experience and a story of culture and tradition.

Moreover, the sustainability involved all around the production process was fascinating. No waste is generated, as the brewery uses all leftovers and remnants for other purposes, such as pastes and sauces, among others. This is such an important practice for Taikan Shuzo that they introduced the “Shokuiku” program, through which they teach students of the region about the importance of making the best out of all the raw materials used and not wasting anything during food- and beverage- making processes. In addition, this experience helped the group understand how artisanal products and techniques still play a big role in Yamanashi’s economy, and how much the community values them.

Day 2: December 5th

Hikari Textiles Co., Ltd.



The textile team, accompanied by Professor Ricardo Peña and the Representative Director of GOROM Association visited the city of Fujiyoshida, the city of weavers, to meet with Hikari Orimono's owner, Mr. Kagami. The team's visit started with Mr. Kagami teaching participants about the process of making the fabrics later used to create products such as Goshuincho, Hina Ningyo, and bags, among others.

Most importantly, Mr. Kagami taught participants about the importance of his role in the community, as Hikari Textiles conducts many activities to create a sense of pride and awareness of the importance of textiles in Fujiyoshida. Examples of such activities are the workshops they carry out with kids from nearby schools to teach them about the cultural importance of textiles, as well as the importance of recycling, upcycling, and caring for the environment.

After having visited Hikari Textiles, the team visited a small dyeing factory called Funakubo Orimono, a very old and traditional Japanese factory which still favors manual labor and traditional technology. It was clear to the participants the importance of respecting and caring for nature, as Funakubo Orimono uses, for example, dead branches from cherry trees to create pink dye and the crystalline water directly from Mt. Fuji.

Afterwards, the textile team visited the Textile Association at Fujiyama Station. It was a small museum-like store that highlighted the importance of textiles for Fujiyoshida's tradition and history. As Fujiyoshida people say, "Our city is a city of weavers". Visiting this place made textile team members truly appreciate that the whole community has been working as one for centuries to enhance the beauty of Fujiyoshida's tradition in Japan.

Last but not least, a visit to Tenjin Factory, owned by Mr. Kobayashi, further stressed the importance many producers give to reducing the waste they produce as much as possible by applying various techniques and uses to their resources. Through these visits, the textile team members learned about the value of honoring the traditions and the history of one's community, as well as the value of being leaders within their communities to become agents of meaningful and positive change.

Day 3: December 6th

Rehearsals at Cross Be Coworking Office

During the three days prior to the main event, the Public Pitch at Yamanashi's Prefectural Library, students had the opportunity to rehearse and adjust their pitching skills as well as their presentations. This time was spent at Cross Be co-working in downtown Kofu, where groups worked together to incorporate new ideas into their projects and receive precise feedback from the Representative Director of GOROM Association, other GOROM Association members of staff and professors from Partner Universities.



Moreover, the presence of Japanese spectators unfamiliar with their work provided valuable insights into the clarity of their proposals and the intuitiveness of their presentation designs for viewers. By having Japanese spectators during the rehearsals, the crucial insight students grasped was that a Japanese audience requires a different way of communicating compared to a Latin American audience in order for a message to be effective and permeate. This activity enhanced students' soft skills such as public speaking, teamwork, rhetoric and intercultural communication: all necessary to deliver the final product.



Day 4: December 7th

Meeting with Yamanashi Prefecture Vice-Governor

SEED Program participants visited the Yamanashi Prefectural Government Offices to meet with Vice Governor, Ko Osada.



This visit was made possible through the great efforts of Mr. Hidenori Miyamoto, a member of the Diet of Yamanashi Prefecture. The meeting started with the opening speech from Vice President Osada welcoming the SEED Program delegation to Yamanashi Prefecture. In his opening speech, he stressed the important role of the Program, highlighting not only the importance of such initiatives in linking Yamanashi with international stakeholders and audiences, but also the impact the work done by the SEED Program has had in supporting Yamanashi's manufacturing industries of jewelry, sake, textiles and wine.

In response, the representative of GOROM Association thanked the Vice Governor and Yamanashi Prefecture officials for their support of the SEED Program, and shared in the belief that it is through this kind of educational experiences that close connections and partnerships can be knit between Japan and Latin America, especially through young professionals' proactiveness and innovative ideas. Through this visit, the participating students learned a lot about the important role of local governments and how traditional local industries can contribute to regional revitalization.

Students from South America visit industries in Yamanashi Prefecture

The nonprofit organization "GOROM" based in Tokyo, which focuses on fostering young talent through exchanges between South America and Japan, conducted a Social Entrepreneurship Program in Yamanashi Prefecture from the 4th to the 8th of this month.

The purpose was to provide an opportunity for practical learning about regional revitalization, marking the second time following last year's initiative. Approximately 40 university students from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Japan arrived in the prefecture on the 4th to visit manufacturing sites in fields such as wine, sake, and jewelry industries.

On the 7th, they held a meeting with Vice Governor Kō Osada at the Prefectural Disaster Prevention New Building in Kofu City. Vice Governor Osada greeted them, expressing his hope that they would draw out new possibilities for the prefecture's traditional industries.



GOROM's representative director, Goro Mutsuura, stated, "We want to provide an opportunity for Latin American students to deepen their understanding of Yamanashi and strengthen bonds."

On the 8th, they held a presentation event in Kofu City to showcase their findings, including proposals for expanding the traditional industries into the South American market.

[Kobayashi Ryoichi]

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English translation of the original article in Yamanashi Sannichi Shimbun

Day 4: December 7th

Visit to Daita Company Ltd.: Scholarship Donor

The scholarship recipient students met with Ms. Masae Nakagomi and Mr. Tetsutaro Nakagomi, Chairman and President, respectively, of Daita Company Limited in Kofu, Yamanashi, to express their gratitude for his generous contribution to make the SEED Program Study Tour possible for five students from GOROM Association's Latin American partner universities. The meeting served as an opportunity for insightful discussions on the prospects of the relations between Japan and Latin America.



All five professors praised Mr. Nakagomi for his innovative mindset, which not only facilitates academic pursuits but also contributes to the broader goal of improving local economies. Above all else, professors highlighted the great and positive impact these scholarships had on the students and the institutions they represent.

Next, it was the scholarship recipient students' turn to share their speeches. While they shared some personal memories, they all coincided in that the opportunity facilitated by Mr. Nakagomi had been life-changing, allowing them to participate in a program dedicated to strengthening their professional skills and drawing them closer to Japan. They spoke of their will to apply the lessons learned in areas such as sustainability, business models, marketing, and diplomacy to create a lasting impact in our fast-changing communities.

Before the meeting came to an end, Mr. Nakagomi shared his enthusiasm for promoting such exchanges, as they provide fertile soil for enhancing the skills and knowledge of soon-to-be professionals looking to connect their region with Japan. Mr. Nakagomi finished his speech by mentioning his desire to visit Latin America in 2024.

The prospect of further collaboration and understanding between the two regions left an optimistic atmosphere, emphasizing the potential for positive transformations through education and cultural exchange.

Day 5: December 8th

Public Pitch Event

at Yamanashi Prefectural Library

The Public Pitch Event was the highlight not only of the Study Tour, but of the whole SEED Program. All the work carried out during six months by GOROM Association, university advisors and students gravitated, in one way or another, towards the Public Pitch.

The event took place on Friday, December 8th in Yamanashi Prefectural Library. Among the audience that filled the venue, local and regional government officials, local producers and program sponsors were present. It is worth mentioning that for a second consecutive year, the SEED Program's Public Pitch Event received national TV coverage by NHK and was covered as well by the local newspaper Yamanashi Sannichi Shinbun.



Textiles Team Presentation

The event began with an opening speech by the Representative Director of GOROM Association, followed by speeches delivered by university advisors, and the core of the event was the pitch presentations made by the students of the SEED Program. Each of the four groups -Sake, Wine, Jewelry and Textile- had 20 minutes to present their pitch to the audience, explaining about their findings and market research, as well as describing their proposed ideas and strategies to answer to the requests made by their respective producer.



Wine Team Presentation

Day 5: December 8th Public Pitch Event at Yamanashi Prefectural Library

The presentations were exhibited in both English and Japanese: Latin American students spoke in English, while Japanese students in each group provided oral translations in Japanese. Moreover, the presentation slides projected on a big screen were in Japanese too. These slides provided insightful information for the audience, such as demographic charts, trend graphs, pictures, written explanations, and more.



Jewelry Team Presentation



Sake Team Presentation



Group Picture at Yamanashi Prefectural Library

Day 6: December 9th

Excursion Trip to Mt. Fuji Area

After the successful completion of Public Pitching, the SEED participants visited the scenic spots around Mt. Fuji, which is famous as a world heritage site in Yamanashi Prefecture. The tour visited Saiko Iyashi-no-Sato Nenba where the site was created with 20 thatched-roof houses, with the aim of reviving the beautiful scenery of the original thatched-roof village lost to the typhoon disaster and building a new tourism exchange center that highlights the local history, culture, and natural environment unique to this area.



The participants then visited to Oshino Hakkai that are the eight springs found in Oshino. They are fed by snow melt from the slopes of nearby Mount Fuji that filters down the mountain through porous layers of lava for over 80 years, resulting in very clear spring water that is revered by the locals. The participants also visited the museum called Fujisan Museum. There is a nature observation room with a panoramic view of Mt. Fuji, and the surrounding area is a historical and cultural park. SEED participants learned about Mt. Fuji worship and the history, folklore, and industry of Fujiyoshida City. The final visit was to a restaurant that serves HOTO, a traditional Yamanashi food, and the students enjoyed Japanese food rooted in the region.



Day 7: December 10th

Japanese Association of Latin American and the Caribbean (JALAC) Meeting

The group of professors from Partner Universities of the SEED Program held a brief and informal meeting with Japanese Professors belonging to the Japanese Association of Latin American and the Caribbean (JALAC). This meeting marked the beginning of the activities' agenda of the SEED Program 2023 in Tokyo.



On behalf of JALAC, the following participants were present at this meeting: Mr. YAMADA Akira, Managing Director at JALAC; Mr. KUDO Akira, Executive Director at JALAC; Mrs. TAKAHASHI Yuriko, Associate Professor at Waseda University; Mr. MASUKATA, Shuichiro, Senior Assistant Professor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies; Mrs. HATAYA, Noriko, Professor at Sophia University, and Mr. TAKESHITA Kojiro, Associate Professor at Takushoku University.

At the meeting, members of JALAC touched on various aspects regarding the current status of the LATAM-Japan relationship. The main topics they mentioned as obstacles impeding the growth of this relationship were a) lack of promotion of Latin American universities in Japan, b) security and safety concerns many Japanese parents have when it comes to considering the possibility of sending their kids to Latin America, c) lack of interest from Japanese students to pursue professional opportunities in LATAM countries. However, JALAC members mentioned one key promising fact: Spanish is now the second most chosen language by Japanese students learning a second or third language, only behind English. Creating opportunities, such as academic and professional experiences, for these students to apply what they have learned is the main challenge and goal we should aim for.

The balance of the meeting was very positive, as both parties showed great appreciation and interest for the other party's work and commitment towards fostering the relationship between Latin America and Japan. All members present exchanged business cards and agreed to keep in touch to develop joint projects to help broaden the connections between both regions.

Day 8: December 11th

Cacao Hunters Co., Ltd.

During the first day in Tokyo, the group met with Ms. Toko Tamaki, Manager of Cacao Hunters Japan, to learn about the work this Colombia-based foundation has been doing. Cacao Hunters is a purpose-driven organization that creates strategies for the improvement, care and permanence of cocoa-growing families and their cocoa crops, in addition to the creation of efficient commercial and agricultural models in all their regions. They seek to achieve organized systems that guarantee profitable income thanks to the most exclusive cocoa and of the highest quality.



Ms. Tamaki showed participants how the philosophy of Cacao Hunters extends beyond buying and selling: it is a lesson in independence. They prioritize education, provide technical assistance to local producers to increase their production, and encourage the implementation of applied innovation. By teaching producers, they provide not only knowledge but also freedom. An independence is awakened that transforms not only how cocoa is harvested but also the lives of those who cultivate it.

Cacao Hunters' mission, vision and values align perfectly with GOROM Association's SEED Program, as in the core of their actions one can find a triple impact: economic, social, and environmental. For that reason, this visit was a fantastic opportunity for SEED students to dive into the world of social entrepreneurship by listening to the experience of an organization doing what they had been researching and working on during the whole semester. As Ms. Tamaki said: "The essence of Cacao Hunters lies in passion, not only in love for cocoa, but in a commitment to making the business a driver of social change."

Inter-American Development Bank

The SEED Program delegation visited the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) headquarters in Tokyo. There, the group was welcomed by Mr. Alfredo Giro Quincke, Operations Senior Advisor for Asia.



Through a presentation Mr. Giro Quincke had prepared, SEED participants learned about the work the IDB carries out throughout the Americas, focusing on supporting sustainable economic and social development in the region in topics like food security and agriculture, climate change, gender and diversity, regional integration, among others.

Mr. Giro Quincke then proceeded to explain about the three main branches of the IDB Group: the IDB, the main entity of the IDB Group, which provides financing, technical assistance, and policy advice to its member countries in LAC; IDB Invest, the private sector arm of the IDB Group; and IDB LAB, the innovation laboratory of the IDB Group.

In consonance with the SEED Program's encouragement towards social entrepreneurship, it was no coincidence that what caught students' attention the most was the work done by the IDB LAB, as it focuses on promoting innovative projects and initiatives that can have a positive impact on development in the region. IDB Lab supports entrepreneurship, startups, and innovative solutions to address social and economic challenges, often by partnering with the private sector, civil society, and governments.

It was interesting the view the IDB has on its role in society. "A bank whose main goal is to disappear" is what Mrs. Giro Quincke said. Students believe that, in a world overcome with conflicts for power, the adoption of the role of a supporter whose sole objective is building bridges between countries and allowing communities to be sustainable, is extremely beneficial.

Furthermore, the bank in its role of supporter states "We don't provide solutions, we finance them". In this way, the IDB not only works towards the sustainability of the developing world, but also leaves room for innovation to occur from within these communities. One of the main takeaways from the visit was the definition of growth that the IDB puts forward, as more than just financial aid or technical assistance, but rather the education and support of talent in the developing world, throughout their institutions.

Day 8: December 11th

Joint class

with Junior Achievement (NGO)

The group of students and professors of the SEED Program had a joint activity at Shinagawa Gakuen with an NGO called Junior Achievement. Professor García led the class by using the Case Study Methodology and dividing the group into smaller groups. Students and professors worked on the case of an Argentinian NGO to study Sustainable Business Models and the impact of successful social entrepreneurship projects in local communities. Professor García focused on extracting the students' main points of view and meticulously organizing them on a whiteboard, resulting in a comprehensive word scheme. The discussion was exceptionally didactic and interactive, allowing participants to become actively involved in the analytical process and understand the case in an engaging and informative way.



Junior Achievement (JA) is a global nonprofit organization that focuses on providing education and programs to young people, primarily in the areas of financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship. They offer various hands-on programs, activities, and experiences to help students understand economic concepts, develop business skills, and prepare for the workforce. JA often collaborates with schools and volunteers from the business community to deliver these programs, aiming to empower young individuals to succeed in the global economy.

Day 9: December 12th

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Participants from the SEED Program visited the offices of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), a key player on the Japanese governmental stage that takes on the hefty responsibility of delivering the majority of Official Development Assistance (ODA) coming from the Japanese government. Its mission? To foster economic and social prosperity in developing nations and cultivate international collaboration.



Participants first received a thorough briefing on JICA's history and work, and the diverse forms JICA provides assistance in a variety of sectors, such as urban and regional development, transportation, energy and mining, agricultural and rural development, education, health, and governance, among many other sectors. As the session progressed, JICA shed light on the mechanics of ODA, explaining the intricate interplay between bilateral relationships, technical cooperation, loans, and the injection of private investments. The students gained valuable insights into the complex network of connections that underpin international collaboration.

Divided in tables according to their countries, students and professors, accompanied by JICA experts, learned about the agency's work in their respective countries. The Argentinian participants learned that JICA plays a prominent role in initiatives ranging from environmental conservation and regional economic revitalization to South-South cooperation. As for Brazil, they learned that the work done by JICA deals mainly with projects addressing urban challenges, environmental disaster prevention, investment environment improvement, and triangular cooperation support through JBPP. Meanwhile, Colombians were shown how JICA projects in their country revolve most prominently around projects targeting people with disabilities, development under peace agreements, livelihood improvement, agricultural development, land mine control, and peace education.

In essence, JICA emerged as a linchpin of global goodwill, a governmental agency orchestrating social projects that transcend borders. The gathering in Japan evolved into a hub of learning, where discussions on social development, social work, and growth opportunities resonated, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate ties binding Japan to nations like Argentina, Colombia, and Brazil.

Day 9: December 12th

Embassy of Brazil

The Brazilian students and professors from ESPM and FAAP visited the Brazilian Embassy in Tokyo, accompanied by Mr. Mutsuura and other Japanese participants. His Excellency Mr. Octávio Henrique Dias Garcia Côrtes, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federative Republic of Brazil welcomed the participants to the Embassy and greeted them with an opening speech. The Ambassador was accompanied as well by Mr. César Yip from Public Diplomacy & Press.

The visit provided insights into the robust cultural exchange between Brazil and Japan, highlighting the significant presence of Brazilians in Japan and vice versa. The presentation delved into the intricate web of economic and social ties binding the two nations, shedding light on the nuanced relationships that extend beyond cultural interactions. Furthermore, present embassy representatives elaborated on the dynamic energy exchanges, underlining the multifaceted nature of the connections that contribute to the strong bond shared between Brazil and Japan. The visit also served as an opportunity to share with the Embassy of Brazil the progress and growth GOROM Association and the SEED Program have had since last year's visit to the Embassy.



Next, there was a presentation by the Association of Brazilian Researchers in Japan (ABrJ), which has the mission of strengthening and promoting ties between scientists, artists, businesspeople, and the community of Brazilians living in Japan. Such promoting actions include, among others, scholarships for those with an interest in studying in Japan for a graduate, masters or doctorate degree.

At the end, students, Professor Micheline Pellaes Neto and Professor Uehara Ratsuo, reflected on their experiences so far as part of the SEED Program, and Mr. Mutsuura expressed his gratitude to the Embassy as well as his commitment to keep fostering the relations between both countries.

Day 9: December 12th

Embassy of Colombia



Colombian students and professors of EAFIT University and Los Andes University conducted a courtesy visit to the Embassy of Colombia in Tokyo. The group was welcomed by Ms. Ángela Durán, Chargée D'affaires a.i.; Ms. María Claudia Vélez Crismatt, Second Secretary of Foreign Affairs and person in charge of Environmental Affairs, Education, ICT, and Communications; and Mr. Juan Camilo Gómez, Commercial Counselor.

The representatives from the embassy commenced the meeting with their opening words, expressing their delight in having the SEED participants present. Students and professors learned about the roles of the institution, mainly focused on developing bilateral cooperations and development projects between the two countries. Additionally, the long history of relations between Japan and Colombia was highlighted, as well as the importance of recognizing that these two countries are not only geographically distant but in terms of knowledge of each other. The Colombian Embassy representatives mentioned that this fact alone has influenced all the projects that the embassy holds.

Participants also learned about some of the current projects that are mainly directed to tourism, commerce and investment. One example was the “Design Contest”, where designers are motivated to create innovative models and prototypes aimed for development in industries and they will get a prize. The contest has been made in Japan mostly, but they said that next year they will do the first version in Colombia.

Later, after all participants introduced themselves, team leaders from the four theme groups shared in higher detail their experiences working with local producers and participating in the SEED Program. The embassy representatives were intrigued by the history and cultural richness behind every product and proposal, and highlighted a future market trend of people wanting more than a product, and that Colombia and Japan had to start looking for ways to exploit that future potential to create development in their industries and societies.

Day 9: December 12th

Suginami Incineration Plant

Students and professors went to Suginami Incineration Plant, one of the main waste treatment facilities in all of Tokyo, to learn about the subject. The plant incinerates collected combustible waste in a way that is safe, stable, and efficient. The visit presented an opportunity for participants to see how organizations or enterprises other than companies or NGOs also seek to comply with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



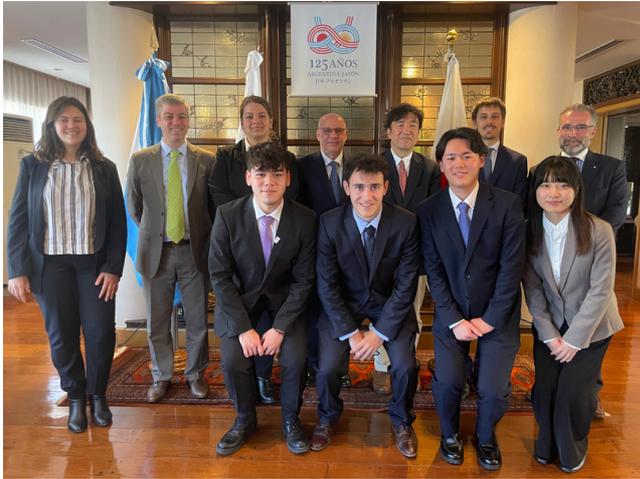
Participants were shown, through videos and guided tours around the facility, the different stages of the waste management process, such as the platform where trucks spend less than two minutes dumping the collected waste; the waste bunker, with its giant crane; the incinerator; and the Central Control Room, from where the whole facility is managed.

According to the last census, more than 13 million people live in the city of Tokyo. The waste generated by that size of a population proves a challenge towards several SDGs: clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production. The plant was designed to be harmonic with the neighborhood, which helps its integration with its surroundings and communities. This successful integration contrasts with the problems some of the cities Latin American students come from have: Buenos Aires doesn't have space for more landfill sites; São Paulo lacks proper waste disposal sites; Colombia's rural areas have a poor waste management strategy compared to urban areas like Bogotá.

Examples of the quest for efficiency and the cleanest energy possible were the concern shown regarding the use of recycled energy, such as using solar panels to make the incinerators work, besides capturing the energy generated by the burning of the dumped waste; and the education for waste and resource sorting provided to the community.

Day 10: December 13th

Embassy of Argentina



On Wednesday, December 13th, students from Argentina, accompanied by two Japanese students, Professor García, and representatives of GOROM Association visited the Embassy of Argentina in Tokyo, where they were welcomed by the Embassy Secretary, Mr. Vera Ziccardi, and the Embassy Chief of Staff, Minister Pedro Marotta. In the meeting room they were joined by His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Tempone, Ambassador of the Argentine Republic in Japan.

During the meeting, several topics were discussed, like the expectations for the political scenario with the beginning of a new presidential mandate in Argentina and its implications in the country's foreign affairs' strategy regarding North-East Asia and Japan. Cultural differences between both countries were also addressed, with Ambassador Tempone commenting that what impressed him the most since the beginning of his tenure as Ambassador to Argentina in Japan has been the cleanliness and respect with which Japanese people care for shared public spaces, as well as the discipline shown by towards rules and norms of conduct that result in a harmonic coexistence of the population. Ambassador Tempone considers that the Argentine population can learn a lot from Japan, but also admits that these differences can create uncomfortable situations between people from both countries, even when doing business.

Afterwards, Professor García and the students shared with the Argentine diplomatic delegation the work they had done during the SEED Program alongside companions from other countries and local producers from Yamanashi. Mr. Mutsuura and Mr. Kavulakian explained about the vision and goal of the institution and the SEED Program, to which they found keen support from the Embassy representatives, especially from Ambassador Tempone.

The discussion also centered on potential collaborations. Notably, there was enthusiasm from the Ambassador to expand the SEED Program, envisioning it not only as a way for Argentinian students to collaborate with Japanese producers but also for Japanese students to venture to Argentina, sharing knowledge and technical skills from Japanese companies and institutions.

Day 10: December 13th

Joint Class at Meiji University

Students from the SEED Program took part in a joint class with students from Meiji University's course on Latin American Studies, in charge of Professor Keisuke Dan. During the class, the group of students discussed the economic and social situations Japan shares with Argentina, Brazil and Colombia.

Before the actual class started, students had time to research on the pressing economic gaps or labour issues affecting their respective countries. More precisely, students were divided into five groups, with approximately 8 students each: half from the SEED Program and the other half from Meiji University; three groups were assigned the theme of "Economic Gaps", while the other two were the theme of "Labour Issues". During this time SEED and Meiji students hadn't yet met each other.



Secondly, after Professor Dan and Mr. Mutsuura made the opening remarks at the beginning of the class, students from the SEED Program and Meiji University had an icebreaking activity to get to know each other. After that, the groups discussed their assigned topic comparing the situation in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Japan through presentations prepared during the research stage.

After this, groups chose one or two students to represent them in reporting to the rest of the class on the findings and conclusions reached. The economic gaps and labour issues discussed covered a range of problems that affect the economy of each country, for example: gender inequality, income disparity and the educational gap, among others. Students were also able to identify many similarities between Japan and Latin America, although the severity of each problem varied from country to country.

This activity provided students with a broader understanding of the problems, causes and consequences that both Japan and Latin America face, having been able to hear and understand that, although their regions are far away from each other geographically, they still suffer from some of the same problems, making the countries more similar than surface-level analysis could show and providing fertile soil for collaboration and joint engagement.

Day 10: December 13th

Welcome event by Meiji University's Students' Committee



After the joint class activity, students from the SEED Program moved into the cafeteria to meet with the students from the International Students' Committee of Meiji University, who had prepared a Welcome Event for Latin American students. The event served as a platform for cultural immersion and the building of meaningful connections. As Latin American students participating in the SEED Program, the experience was not just an introduction to Japanese university life, but a lesson in the power of cross-cultural engagement.

The Japanese students were cultural ambassadors, planning a series of activities such as a traditional Sadō (Japanese tea ceremony) and Shodō (Japanese calligraphy) workshops. During the second half of the event, Japanese and Latin American students shared with each other sweets and treats typical of their home countries.

While Sadō offered a glimpse into the meticulous artistry behind this traditional Japanese tea ceremony, fostering an appreciation for protocol and harmony, Shodō taught students that each stroke is a gesture of intention, and the beauty of expression behind each stroke. Under the guidance of Meiji University students, each Latin American student got the chance to make their own matcha tea and write their names in Kanji.

Each activity was a ritualistic act that served as a bridge between the past and the present, embodying the continuity of a cultural heritage that young generations are still eager to promote. Beyond the exchange of traditions and rituals, it was also an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and, ultimately, an understanding of a culture so different from SEED Program students' cultures.

By immersing themselves in Japanese traditions, students discovered approaches to understanding and bridging cultural gaps, fostering collaboration, and creating a global network honoring and respecting their own unique backgrounds. This taught them the immense value in fostering connections between students from different cultures, and how it can contribute to the creation of a more interconnected and understanding world.

Day 11: December 14th

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

A group of selected participants of the SEED Program visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Attendees actively engaged in conversations about the complex relationship between Latin American countries and Japan, with a specific focus on current political and business collaborations.

During the meeting, Mr. Yasuhiro Tsukamoto, Director of the Division of South American and Caribbean Affairs Bureau, provided detailed explanations and addressed questions related to bureaucratic and business processes in which students were particularly interested, given that most of them are currently studying international relations or economics.



The conversation served as a way to demystify the perceived complexities of joint collaboration between the two regions due to cultural differences, offering valuable insights into both diplomatic and economic aspects of collaboration.

This interaction led to both students and professors gaining a deeper understanding of the inner workings of international relations and cooperation, which developed a heightened appreciation for the strategic planning involved in diplomatic efforts.

Leaving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the participants carried with them not only increased knowledge but also a renewed enthusiasm for building robust connections between Japan and Latin American countries. This experience served as a catalyst for further exploration of opportunities for cooperation and understanding on the global stage.

Day 11: December 14th

Meeting with Nippon Koei Co., Ltd.

On December 14th, participants from the SEED Program visited the Nippon Koei HQ, located in the district of Chiyoda, Tokyo, to learn more about this engineering and development consulting organization, and carry out a workshop with some of their professionals.



At the start of the activity, Mr. Takahashi, Executive Officer, Chief Regional Officer (Sub-Saharan Africa) and Regional Officer (North & Latin America), welcomed the SEED participants with an opening speech and an overview of the company's work and philosophy behind Nippon Koei's management strategies. Mr. Takahashi also explained to attendees about the new ID&E Group, a holding company established in July 2023, responsible for the formulation of group-wide strategies and governance. As part of the ID&E Group, attendees learned that Nippon Koei is highly committed to worldwide sustainable development consultancy and innovative managerial strategies. Lastly, Mr. Takahashi ended his presentation with a theoretical explanation of the tools the company uses to prepare a strategic business plan (3C Model, SWOT/Cross SWOT Analysis, PESTLE).

Afterwards, students were divided into groups according to the theme they belonged to, and were joined by an expert consultant from Nippon Koei with experience in Latin American countries. The consultants met with the teams at different work tables, where the groups presented the work they had carried out throughout the program and their final pitches in Japanese. The consultants provided feedback on various issues and commented on the quality of the work presented. They also gave valuable recommendations to improve their work in future projects. For instance, feedback was given regarding: market branding, presentation structure, and storytelling and purpose-setting to build business strategies upon.

Day 11: December 14th

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)

All participants from the SEED Program, including GOROM Association staff members and professors, had an opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). Participants were welcomed by several senior METI representatives, led by Mr. Satoshi Miura, Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Office in the Trade Policy Bureau.



The event was initiated by Mr. Miura's opening speech, through which he stressed the untapped possibilities still to be exploited between Japan and the LAC region and the efforts made by SEED participants to help build connections and bridges to do so. After Mr. Miura's speech, team leaders from all four theme groups shared their group's experience and involvement in working with local producers from Japan and elaborating proposals to help them reach LAC markets. Products from different countries, such as an assortment of Argentinian wines and Japanese sake, or Colombian and Brazilian snacks, were displayed as a way to showcase some of the products currently being imported to Japan from Latin American countries.

Meanwhile, attendees engaged in intriguing conversations about ways to bring Japan and LAC closer together, possible collaborations, and upcoming opportunities for joint actions. In particular, students talked with METI representatives, for example, about subjects such as academic and job projections in Latin America and Japan, cultural and commercial trading opportunities between both regions, and even exchanged personal business cards to keep in contact.



The Director-General of the Latin American and Caribbean Affairs Bureau from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Yasushi Noguchi, present among the attendees during the event, also delivered a speech about the importance of the SEED Program's presence and the prospect of maintaining collaboration and working together in the future.

Day 12: December 15th

Ramen workshop

As a way to start the final day of the study tour, on December 15th students engaged in a ramen workshop in the vibrant district of Shibuya. The event unfolded with a demonstration by a skilled ramen chef, Ms. Harumi Takase, showcasing the artistry behind ramen.



Ms. Takase introduced miso pastes from different regions and let the students taste them, briefly explaining how miso is made and how it differs in color and taste. The students experienced the process of making a miso ramen from scratch, from boiling the noodles, dissolving the miso in the soup, and decorating the noodles with their favorite ingredients. Observing the chef's meticulous actions, the students appreciated the time and effort required to prepare this classic Japanese dish, including the necessary tools and ingredients.

Through this event, the students learned about Japanese miso culture and enjoyed original Japanese ramen by combining their favorite miso paste and toppings. However, the activity went beyond the culinary experience, as the group played a music playlist featuring songs from each participant's home country and danced to the music festively. The ambiance resonated with cultural diversity, fostering a shared sense of unity.



Testimonies from Students



Mayara Lana Gouveia Silva
Textile group Team Leader
Cinema and Animation student
FAAP, Brazil

Joining the SEED Program has been life-changing. Learning from professionals, government officials, and local producers, who contribute to shaping communities has been incredibly inspiring. This program is more than just education; it's a doorway to practical wisdom and valuable connections that promise a brighter professional future. Being in touch with these inspirational figures has widened my perspective and sparked hope. It's not just about what I've learned but also about the potential to collaborate and make a real difference. This journey has filled me with optimism, knowing that I'm equipped with knowledge and connections that can positively impact both local communities and the broader global landscape.

Attending the SEED Program has been one of my happiest experiences in my life, as it was not only a great opportunity to get to know the beauty of Japan and Yamanashi, but also one of the first and most crucial steps towards achieving my goal of connecting Colombia to the Asia-Pacific region. Similar to GOROM Association's dream of connecting Japan with Latin America, I want Colombia to continue evolving into a more advanced and secure country through the connection and collaboration with the Asia-Pacific region, especially with Japan. Last but not least, I learnt about the importance of becoming a leader within my community, and to try my best to have a positive impact in the lives of others.



Camilo Rodríguez Gómez
Scholarship recipient student
International Business student
EAFIT University, Colombia



Pedro Paulo García Salvador
Sake Team Leader
International Relations student
at FAAP, Brazil

As the Team Leader of the Sake Team, I experienced a lot of challenges, activities and responsibilities, all of them, worth it. Those challenges were very diverse and ranged from simple things to difficult things, such as: dealing with the departure of a team member, working with a new team member to have the Japanese translation, giving news and information to your team, and other challenges. Those challenges and responsibilities, although demanding, were great for developing social, professional, and cultural skills.

Testimonies from Students

The SEED program is probably the most valuable experience of my undergraduate degree. Not only did we have the opportunity to travel to Japan with a partial scholarship, but we also did it in order to present the results of 6 months of work. During the online sessions we participated in useful lessons that helped us develop a good project, while simultaneously applying the tools we learned during our academic careers in a real professional setting. The study tour was probably the best part of the whole experience, as it mainly focused in public relations and visiting, both public and private, institutions. Overall, a highly enriching experience and a dream come true!



Benjamín Vélez Ortega
Wine Team Leader
Economics student
at EAFIT University, Colombia



Anahí Zucchi
Jewelry Team Leader
Public Accounting student
at Austral University, Argentina

We live in a world of progress and economic development, and yet inequality and poverty are growing global concerns. We live in a world of constant technological expansion and communication, and yet we have trouble establishing meaningful relationships with people. Professionally the SEED Program has allowed me to question what I want my future career path to be, in helping local productions to expand, I realized the importance of working towards an equal creation of value throughout the whole stakeholder environment, specially the environment and communities. Personally, the SEED Program has allowed me to understand, that good teamwork comes from listening and understanding people, and that despite being far away from each other, there are more things that connect people, than what separates them. Programs as SEED are the bridge that connects students from all around the world and in doing so contributes to the formation of more emphatic future professionals.

Business Owners in Yamanashi

L'ORIENT Brewery



The Company's vineyard, located in Katsunuma, Yamanashi, is the perfect environment for viticulture due to its favorable climate and geology. Shirayuri Brewery places a strong emphasis on being “local”, and their philosophy is to respect and be a part of the local community. They are passionate about everything from viticulture to winemaking.



The sake brand “Taikan” gets its name from the term taikan, which refers to a military officer who has achieved success and accomplishments. The name was chosen to be fitting for special occasions and celebrations. Taikan has a rich history dating back to 1877, with over 140 years of tradition in sake production.

Taikan Brewery



TO LABO



Kofu, Yamanashi has a long tradition of superior stone polishing techniques. Mr. Tomohiko Ohyori, owner and the artisan of TO LABO jewelry boutique is committed to researching and carefully creating jewelry that will bring joy and enrichment to the lives of those who wear it. TO LABO is proud to share their products made with care in Kofu with the world.



Mr. Takuya Kagami is a fourth generation owner of this family owned business located in Fujiyoshida, Yamanashi, also known as “the city of weavers”. Hikari Orimono has been operating for more than 50 years, and makes cloth and textile-related products using thread dyed with spring water from Mount Fuji and traditional weaving techniques.

Hikari Textiles Co., Ltd.



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**Ana Mariana Cordeiro
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Masaki Yuki
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Students' Profiles

Jewelry Team



Anahí Zucchi
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