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Graduate student Aomi Katagiri exchanged views with H. E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to Japan. Graduate student Nanami Jikuya visited Ghana and held activities in medical facilities and schools with graduate student Floret Maame Owusu.

(Details)

Graduate student Aomi Katagiri exchanged views with H. E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to Japan on Monday, January 26.

Aomi is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of NGO Reaching Zero-Dose Children, and exchanged views with H. E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to Japan on Japan and Ghana's progress and future prospects toward improving access to primary healthcare for children, including vaccinations.

During the meeting, it was noted that the importance of vaccines is widely recognized in Ghana, that transportation access is a major challenge for those unable to receive primary healthcare, and that the fight against malaria is a significant challenge with high expectations placed on the effectiveness of vaccines.



Based on the results of this exchange, graduate student Nanami Jikuya visited Ghana from Saturday, February 14 to Tuesday, February 25. She joined graduate student Floret Maame Owusu there, and visited medical facilities, engaged in dialogue with healthcare workers and parents of children, and conducted health education activities in schools.

Observations of Healthcare and Community Activities in Ghana

We had the privilege of visiting healthcare facilities at various levels of the health system in Ghana, as well as community settings such as schools and churches. Interacting with both healthcare workers and community members deepened our understanding of local health challenges. Viewing health not only within healthcare institutions but also within educational and community contexts is an important perspective in public health. By visiting a variety of settings and comparing their respective roles and functions, this experience provided an opportunity to learn about

community health systems from multiple perspectives, encompassing not only healthcare delivery, but also prevention, particularly health education.



Applying Public Health Perspectives Learned in the MPH Program

This visit also provided an opportunity to consider how the knowledge acquired through the Master of Public Health (MPH) program at the Institute of Science Tokyo could be applied in real community settings.

During the health education activities conducted at schools and church-based children and youth groups, we incorporated the framework of the P-Process, a strategic approach to health communication. The P-Process emphasizes understanding the needs and social context of the target community and designing health messages and interventions based on those insights. Prior to implementing the activities, we held discussions with healthcare professionals, educators, and community members to understand their health concerns. Based on these discussions, we adjusted the themes and communication approaches used in the health education sessions. This experience highlighted the importance of delivering health information in ways that are responsive to the cultural context and living environment of the community.

In addition, during visits to healthcare facilities, we exchanged views with healthcare professionals regarding the structure of local healthcare delivery systems and access to medical services. In the field of public health, achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC)—ensuring that all people have access to the healthcare services they need—is a major global goal. Through observing the efforts of local healthcare institutions, we gained a deeper understanding of both the strategies and challenges involved in delivering healthcare services to communities with limited resources.



Discussion with the Ambassador of Japan to Ghana

While in Ghana, we also had the opportunity to meet with H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Yoshimoto, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Ghana, and to hear his insights on healthcare policy and public health challenges in Ghana. Our discussion included efforts toward achieving UHC and the role of international cooperation in strengthening healthcare systems.

One issue that left a particularly strong impression was the serious impact of illegal gold mining known as “galamsey.” In these mining activities, hazardous substances such as

mercury and cyanide are often used during the extraction process. These chemicals can contaminate rivers and soil, posing significant risks to the health of local communities. Such environmental pollution may lead to a range of health problems and increase the burden on local healthcare systems. Learning about these challenges highlighted the importance of addressing environmental issues as part of broader public health efforts.

Learning Global Health from Local Voices

Through this visit, we were reminded that health and healthcare challenges cannot be understood solely within the walls of medical institutions. They are closely connected to many factors, including culture, education, living environments, and community relationships. Creating opportunities to discuss health in everyday community settings such as schools and churches, and engaging directly with local residents, are essential components of global health practice.

The insights gained through dialogue and firsthand experience during this visit to Ghana provided valuable perspectives for understanding health challenges in their local context. These experiences will continue to inform future efforts to address health issues while carefully listening to the voices and needs of local communities.



For details of the visit to H. E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to Japan, please click here.

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