



Daisuke Gatanaga

Daisuke Gatanaga was born in Southern California. As a Japanese-American, he has attended Japanese school in the United States since he was a child, and has always felt a strong personal connection with Japan. He is currently a student at Yale University studying Chemistry. Though he is majoring in a hard science, he is interested in international organizations including the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, and, in particular, how they shape Japan-America relations. He studied in Kyoto, Japan over the summer of 2011, and interned at the United Nations World Food Programme at the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan over the summer of 2012. Outside of his academic interests, he enjoys Karate, which he has practiced since he was in elementary school.

Essay

Listening to Youth Voices: The Global Economy and the Role of the IMF

Being in Chemistry major at Yale, I admit that I occasionally found myself too enraptured in my studies of electrons and protons to care about much else. This summer however, I stepped outside the insular world of the chemistry lab to intern at the World Food Programme. The images that I encountered through my work there were breathtaking and alarming. In the Sahel, mothers have been boiling otherwise inedible toxic plants, trying desperately to provide their children with meager amounts of food. In South Sudan, violence has erupted over poor harvests, displacing many and leaving them with little hope or livelihood. Around the world, these food crises have been exacerbated by economic conditions including high inflation, price increases of food and fuel, and volatile global markets.

Having lived the majority of my life relatively comfortably in developed countries such as the United States and Japan, I can hardly fathom the distress of being unable to afford even basic subsistence. Around me however, many people that I have personally known have faced lost sources of income as their parents have lost their jobs. I have witnessed the sadness and gloom that inevitably affects my friends whose families have been impacted by the recent crisis as they face a seemingly cold and unsympathetic market.

I cannot profess to be able to propose groundbreaking advice to solve such economic problems. But my own experiences with the WFP and through witnessing first-handedly the effects of the economy on the lives of my friends have illuminated the realities of today's global financial system and its recent financial crises. Though the reverberations of these crises differ from country to country, it seems apparent, especially in light of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, that flags have been raised around the world. Given the fact that internationalization continues to link national economies into international networks, global institutions such as the IMF must play essential roles in macroprudential supervision and in ensuring universal economic growth and financial stability. At the same time however, it is critical that the IMF not forget – amidst the objective numbers and data and calculations that go into monetary surveillance and analysis – that the economy affects real people, that there are real voices behind such statistics.

I believe the role of the IMF, then, is to provide a medium through which people around the world – including young adults like me – can vocalize their opinions and engage in bilateral conversation. As an international monetary institution, the IMF is uniquely situated to provide such a forum of

interaction incorporating a wide range of people from a spectrum of backgrounds. Only when people feel like they have a stake and a voice in the future can there be any hope of international cooperation and understanding, or any prospect of eliminating the deficiencies in information, communication, and transparency that spurred past economic crises. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, my conviction is that the IMF provides a foundation from which we can look to the future with optimism as we strive to forge international monetary cooperation.