

THE YOUTH INVITATION PROGRAMME

ASIA, PACIFIC, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA AND SAUDI ARABIA

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THE YOUTH INVITATION PROGRAMME

—ASIA, PACIFIC, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA AND SAUDI ARABIA—[Report](2001)

TRAINING AND YOUTH INVITATION DIVISION
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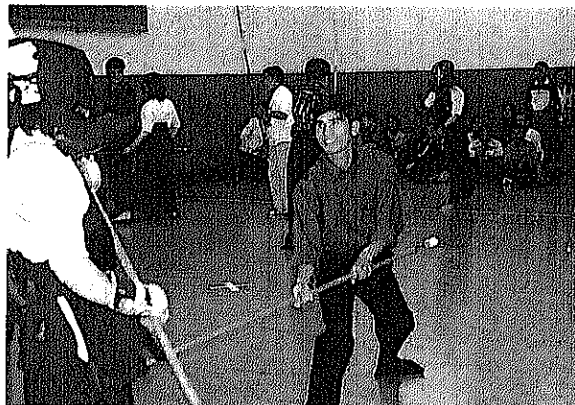
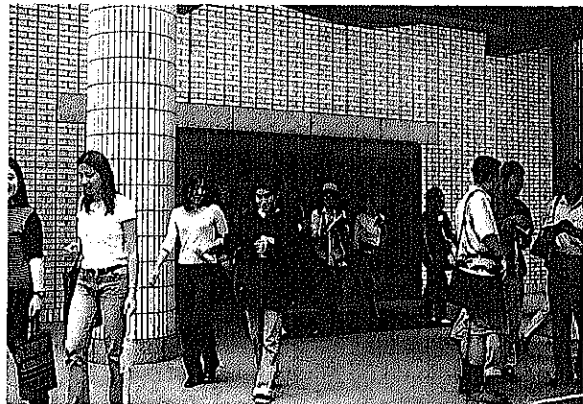
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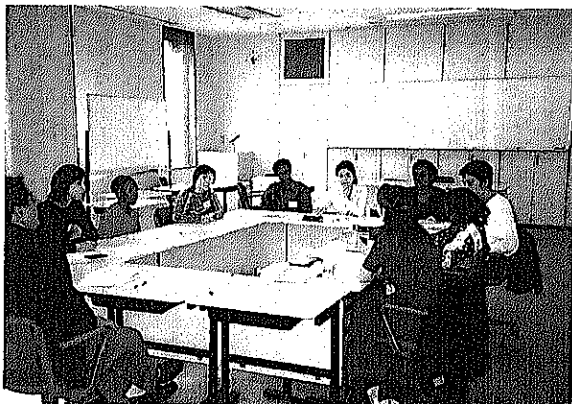
GENERAL ORIENTATION PROGRAMME



SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME IN TOKYO



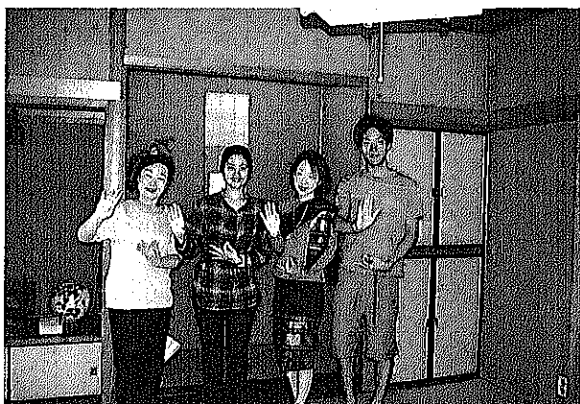
IN-HOUSE SEMINAR



SPECIALIZED PROGRAMME IN DIFFERENT PREFECTURE



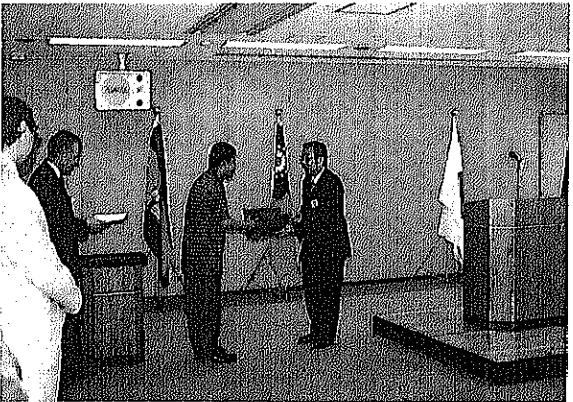
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THE YOUTH INVITATION PROGRAMME

FOREWORD

“The Youth Invitation Programme” is implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a part of a technical cooperation scheme for developing countries. Under this programme young people who will shoulder the task of future nation-building are invited to Japan for four weeks in different groups categorized by their specialized fields. The purpose of this Programme is to provide the young participants with opportunities to study their respective fields. It is also meant to deepen mutual understanding through broad exchanges with Japanese people, including their host family members so that the participants will be able to establish friendly relationships based upon mutual trust.

At first, only six ASEAN countries participated. Our network of friendship, however, has greatly expanded to include approximately 123 countries and territories.

In the 18 years since the Programme started in 1984, a total of 23,256 young people have visited Japan. I wish to express my deepest appreciation for the warm support and cooperation of all those who have greatly contributed to the Programme.

This Report is a brief account of the participants' stays in Japan, along with essays contributed by some of the participants, by the Japanese youths who took part in the In-house Seminars, as well as by the host families in various parts of Japan. We will be quite delighted if this account helps in developing this programme further and serves to bring good memories to those concerned with it.

This Report will be sent to all the participants of the year 2001 and to those concerned in the participating countries.

In closing, I wish to convey my deep and sincere gratitude to everyone who has sent us touching essays and sincere opinions. I hope for your continued support and cooperation towards making the Youth Invitation Programme even more worthwhile in the years to come.

Thank you very much.

March 2002

Takeshi Imazu
Managing Director, Domestic Partnership and Training Department
Japan International Cooperation Agency

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1 . The Youth Invitation Programme

Asia, Pacific, Africa, Latin America and Saudi Arabia

1-1 Outline of the Programme

(1) Purpose

“The Youth Invitation Programme” is implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a part of a technical cooperation scheme for developing countries. Under the programme young people from these countries, who will shoulder the task of future nation-building, are invited to Japan for 28 days in different groups categorized by their specialized fields. The purpose of this programme is to provide the participants with opportunities to study their respective fields, as well as to deepen mutual understanding, thereby they can create trust and friendship through exchanges with the Japanese people of the same generation.

(2) Group Categories

① Economy, Small and Medium Industries

Civil servants in charge of economy

Persons engaged in trading and finance

Persons engaged in small and medium industries etc.

[Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam, ASEAN Component, Pacific Countries and Territories, Central Asian Countries, Caucasian Countries]

② Education, Teachers, Natural Science Teachers, Female Teachers, Primary, Middle and High School Teachers

Teachers, Civil servants in charge of educational administration

Persons engaged in culture and sports etc.

[Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam, ASEAN Component, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, African Countries, Latin American Countries]

③ Youth Leaders, Administration, Local Administration Officials, Civil Servants

Government officials engaged in national administration

Government officials engaged in local administration

Public organization staffs etc.

[Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam, Mongolia, East Timor]

④ Agriculture, Forestry

Civil servants in charge of agriculture, forestry and fishery

Persons in charge of agriculture, forestry and fishery etc.

[Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam]

⑤ Scientific and Technological Developments

Civil servants in scientific and technological administration

Researchers specializing in science and technological development etc.

[ASEAN Component]

⑥Public Utilities

Civil servants in charge of communication
Persons engaged in communication etc.
[ASEAN Component]

⑦Environmental Protection

Civil Servants in charge of environmental administration
Persons engaged in communication etc.
[ASEAN Component, Pacific Countries and Territories]

⑧Local Development, Rural Development, Social Development

Civil servants in charge of development administration
Persons engaged in Local development etc.
[Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Pacific Countries and Territories, Papua New Guinea]

⑨Medical Fields, Health and Medical Services

Medical doctors and people who work in medical field
Civil servants in charge of public health
Persons engaged in public health etc.
[ASEAN Component, African Countries]

⑩Social Welfare

Civil servants in charge of social welfare, Persons engaged in social welfare
Persons engaged in public service, Civil servants in charge of social insurance and labor issue etc.
[ASEAN Component, Latin American Countries]

⑪Mass Media

Government official, Journalist etc.
[Saudi Arabia]

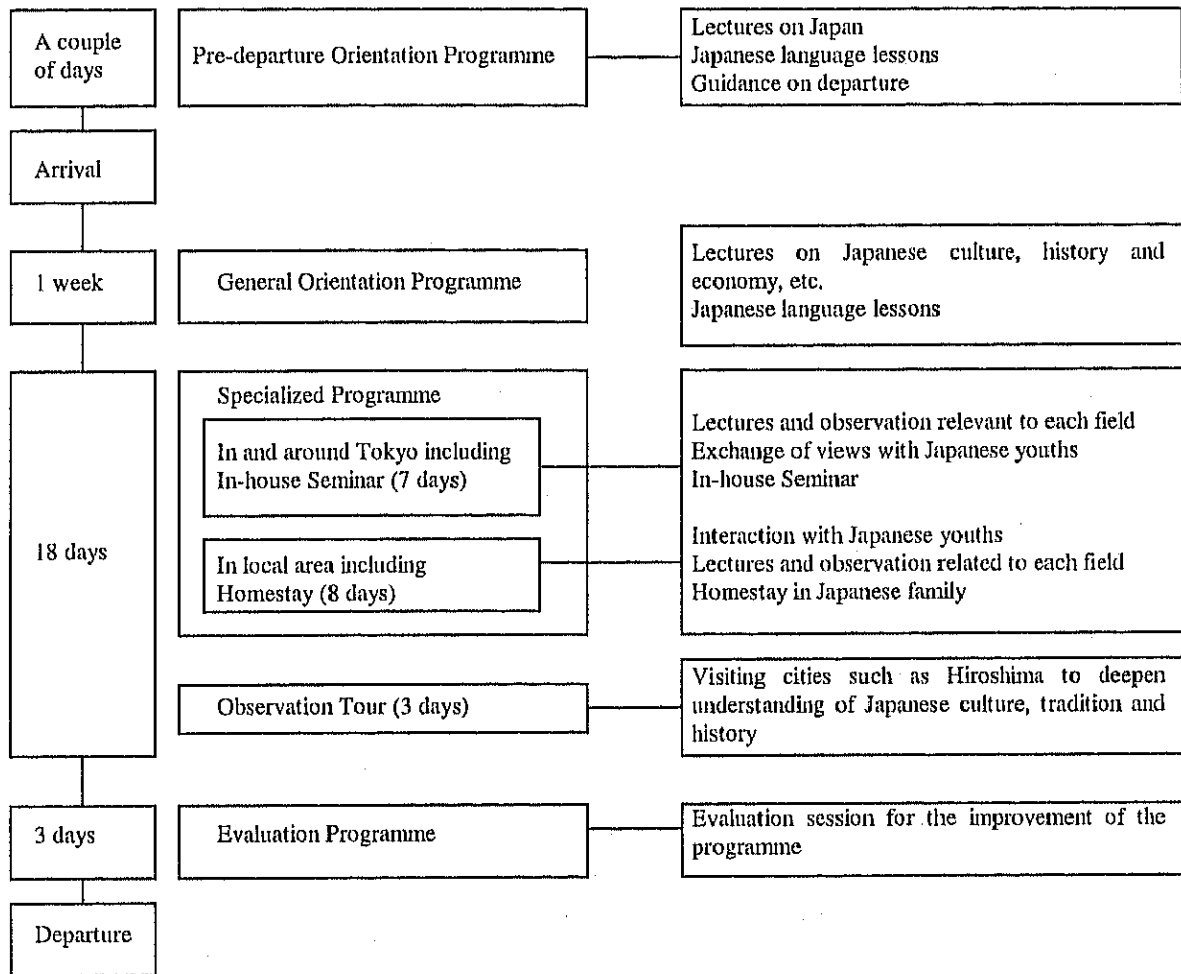
(3) During and Number of Participants

817 young people from nine ASEAN countries and territories (147 from Indonesia, 156 from Malaysia, 149 from Philippines, 150 from Thailand, 100 from Viet Nam, 30 from Laos, 40 from Cambodia, 30 from Myanmar, 15 from East Timor), 89 from 14 Pacific countries and territories (including Papua New Guinea and Fiji), 318 from China, 97 from Korea, 143 from South Asian countries (including India and Pakistan), 10 from Mongolia, 130 from 41 African countries, 47 from 29 Latin American countries, 17 from Saudi Arabia, 53 from 5 Central Asian countries, 28 from 3 Caucasian countries were invited to Japan for a period of 28 days from May 2001 to April 2002. 1,749 youths were invited in all under the Youth Invitation Programme.

(4) Pre-departure Programme and Four-week Programme in Japan

- ①Pre-departure Orientation Programme in the respective countries
- ②General Orientation in Tokyo or Osaka
- ③Specialized Programme (including In-house Seminar and Homestay)
- ④Evaluation and Preparation for departure

(5) A Programme Model



(6) Aftercare Project

In order to promote the understanding of Japan by the youths who were invited under the Youth Invitation Programme and also to perpetuate the friendship between them and Japanese youth, JICA has been conducting an aftercare project as follows.

① Supplementary Literature

JICA supplies the youths who participated, after their return, with an "Exchange Report" which is a digest of the programme of the year and a newsletter "JICA Network," so that they can keep up their understanding of Japan.

② Alumni Associations

JICA promotes the organization of Alumni association which consists of ex-participants of this friendship programme in each of the participating countries respectively. Alumni associations take the initiative in cooperating in pre-departure Programme for new participants, holding meetings and issuing bulletins for their members. JICA offers support to alumni associations by bearing costs of their activities, etc.

Alumni associations have already been organized in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam. Also in Laos, preparation is being done for organizing an alumni association. Apart from these countries, there are some other nations whose former-participants of this programme organize alumni associations in collaboration with ex-participants who took the technical training course in Japan.

③ Alumni Liaison Conference

Representative of alumni associations in respective countries meet together to hold an alumni liaison conference for the purpose of promoting activities of each alumni association and ensuring continuous development of the Youth Invitation Programme.

JICA gives financial support to alumni liaison conferences by bearing various expenses. JICA also sends a Japanese delegation to the alumni liaison conference to exchange views.

Up to the present, the alumni liaison conferences have been held in the six ASEAN countries and the first time to hold an alumni liaison conference every year. In April 2000, alumni representatives from each nation were invited to Japan, where the 2000 Symposium was held.

④ Follow-up Mission

To the participating countries, JICA sends missions which consist of Japanese youths, host families, staff members of related organizations, who played a major role in receiving participants in Japan, to ensure further understanding of Japan among the ex-participants. At the same time, Japanese delegations deepen their understanding of the actual conditions of those countries, which contributes to the improvement in planning of programmes.

Follow-up missions expand and develop the Youth Invitation Programme, which used to be rather unilateral, into an "exchange" programme in its true sense which enhances mutual trust and friendship between the youths of Japan and the participating countries.

In 2001, three follow-up mission teams visited.

2. Impressions by the Participants

■ Asia

■ Cambodia

Training in Japan

Mee Yuun

Agriculture (Rural Development) Group

We, as representatives of both ministry of agriculture, forestry and fishery and ministry of rural development under the Kingdom of Cambodia, took part in this Youth Invitation Programme. We had a brief lecture about Japanese language and Japanese society as pre-departure programme in Cambodia and we also had some lectures about Japanese language, Japanese society and post-war agriculture in Japan after our arrival. Besides, we experienced martial arts and given a lecture on national agriculture council.

At Kanagawa Prefecture we visited agriculture research center and learned about improvement of fruits and vegetables. Then we moved to Hiroshima Prefecture and went courtesy — call to mayor at Shobara. We observed JA in Shobara City, Tagawa Elementary School and Denen Culture Center. We also visited farmers producing fruits and cattle farms. At Shobara Technical High School we experienced milking cows. What was the most memorable among these was homestay with host family. Furthermore we paid a visit to Peace memorial museum in Hiroshima and in Kyoto we went to the traditional buildings of Kinkaku-ji Temple and Ginkaku-ji Temple. During the programme the various exchange with Japanese counterparts became very fruitful to Cambodian participants.

And knowledges and experiences we got through training facilities were very precious and meaningful ones. We never forget these memories at heart. We deeply appreciate Japanese government and related organizations, which gave us chances to learn very important subjects. We'll tell the useful results of study to all when we go back home.

Impression of the Youth Invitation Programme

Sophan Sou

Civil Servants Group

The Youth Invitation Programme is aiming to offer opportunities to promote friendship between Japanese youth and youth from other countries. At the same time, in this programme advanced Japanese technology and affectionateness of its people are also introduced. We have reached to our goal of participating this programme. Not only with Japanese participants but also with lots of people, we established cordial relations. And the programme will be an unforgettable memory for us.

The discussion programme of the In-house Seminar, observation tour to science and cultural facilities, exchange programmes and Homestay Programme, all these offered us opportunities to gain experience and knowledge. I believe that our experience here will work for development of rural areas and cities in Cambodia. We also observed Japanese culture and customs. We were also very impressed by the warm hospitality of host families. The warmth given by Japanese will remain our minds throughout our lives. One more remarkable point is; the level

of life style in rural areas in Japan is as high as its in cities. Household effects are equipped fully. Public facilities in rural areas are also as well equipped with advanced technology as those in cities.

Now we are separating, but this is not a separation for perpetuity. Keeping this separation as a good memory in our minds, we long for our reunion in the future. Lastly I strongly wish the friendship between Japan and Cambodia will remain forever.

After Attending the Youth Invitation Programme

Sokhon Chhim
ASEAN Comp.
Education Group

On behalf of representative of Youth of the ASEAN Component Education, I would like to say that the Youth Invitation Programme is very important for all participants because we have known the ASEAN culture of each country performances, we knew level of ASEAN education of group discussions, and we also have enhanced understanding of level of Japanese education and Japanese society and we have exchanged the opinion with Japanese PTA. In the Youth Invitation Programme, we have made friendship with Japanese volunteers, Japanese people and host families, and we have shared experience with the ASEAN countries, especially we have shared experience with the Japanese people.

We hope that after this programme, we are going to get back all new experience and knowledge to serve and develop our countries as much as better.

Finally, I would like to express my deep thanks to JICA for inviting ASEAN Youth to attend the Youth Invitation Programme 2001 and to all the participants for their kind attention.

■ Asia

■ Indonesia

Colour of Life

Siti Ayu Mirna Sisca Sari
Small and Medium Industry Group

Whenever I hear name of "Japan," immediately beautiful scenery of Mt. Fuji and cherry blossom is envisioned. Yes, ladies in Kimono, Japanese traditional costume, also come to my mind. To the contrary, images of busy people producing robots hastily also come to my mind. The name of Japan is closely associated with names of motor or electric appliance manufacturers such as Yamaha, Suzuki, Aiwa, Sonny and so on, for many of Indonesian.

At the first, I wondered how we could establish friendship with Japanese, how we could deepen our knowledge on Japanese culture or how we could obtain information on our special field only for 28 days. When the programme started, I found that our schedule was well organized enough to attain those purposes for short period. Consequently, now I have clear vision on "what kind of people Japanese are."

There are many differences on the social value, culture, custom and ways of thinking. But such differences brought us interests to each other and motivation to widen our view. I realised that basically human beings have the same kind of sense of value by birth. But through the stages of growth, different sense of social or cultural value is implanted in our minds. Often we value other people by his sense of social or cultural value, language or racial aspect. But we should face to others as an individual person among "human beings in the same social." "Difference" is a flower to enrich our world.

First Experience of Hot Spring

Estlarty Haryani
Administration Group

The Administration group had our Homestay Programme in Yamagata Prefecture. This is one of my episodes during the Homestay Programme.

Before we arrived at Yamagata, we heard that Yamagata is a beautiful area holding more than 100 hot spring resorts. My host family suggested me to visit one of them to relax viewing beautiful scenery around since I had been following hard schedule for about one month.

I thought I could use cloth to cover my body and then bathe in herbal hot water. But when I enter the hot spring, surpassingly people just hold a small towel to wash, and bathe in hot water wearing nothing, but totally naked. Although ladies and gent's bathrooms are separated, I was so embarrassed. But I decided to follow other people. Once bathing in hot spring, I found it is magic. Now it has turned to unforgettable first experience for me.

Whenever you have a chance to visit Yamagata, don't miss taking bath in a hot spring. It is really pleasant.

Development Regarded Environment

Reviva Maringika
Local Development Group

Now influences for environment during the process of developments is a global issue. Although it can not be called as an academical research parametre, it was very interesting to observe Japan's present situation of infrastructure concerning to environment issues, such as power plants, glass factory, Tokyo coastal subcentre and so on. According to our observation, consideration toward environment on the development plan is a pressing issue. And practically, whenever they plan any infrastructure projects, always they take account of environment surrounded.

Generally, they work out multi-functional integrated infrastructure in Japan. For example, when there is a plan of construction of a bridge, they plan to use it not only for a motorway and railway but also for the purpose of tourism.

Consideration for environment is also promoted by citizen's commitments which is consisted of people with highly conscious of clean and green environment. Japanese are well disciplined. They are particular about city beatification; for example, waste tips are arranged strictly. It was very interesting for us to observe environment protection activities at the both administration and civil levels. When the present condition of Indonesia's development is compared to its in Japan, we also have to consider of the different backgrounds, since there are differences on history, culture and system of rural development in both countries.

However we should learn lots from Japan on its spirit and significance of environment stressed development. At least, learning from Japan we would obtain worthwhile comparative value for our state level and rural development. This conclusion is what I have learnt during our short stay in Japan. I hope I will have another chance to come to Japan for deeper observation.

Souvenir from the Land of Cherry Blossom

Watmiani
Teachers Group

Arrived at the land of cherry blossom, Japan I was surprised at their punctuality. People are very particular on time; traffic condition and waste treatment systems are well organized. Also people love reading, even on a bus or

train whenever they are waiting, people read books. From these facts, I could imagine how Japan made its rapid growth after the war.

On the contrary, I was disappointed when I compared with the condition in Indonesia. In Indonesia, punctuality and desire for reading are not so strong as those in Japan. Daily necessities are given priority in Indonesia. The reason is not only the economical condition but also there are not enough books, which meet people's needs. Even I, as a schoolteacher, often have difficulties to find appropriate books for teaching. Whenever I face to books accumulated dust on them in a library, I feel sad. Had Indonesian people had punctuality and desire for reading as much as Japanese have, Since Indonesia is rich in natural resources, we would have developed better than today's Japan's level.

The other hand, I pride of the advantage of Indonesia, which Japan does not have. Children in Indonesia are independent from adults and they flourish their world in cooperation each other. Their faces are vigor and energy.

I brought a precious souvenir from the beautiful cherry blossom country. All good parts of what I experienced in Japan will be utilized at home and school. And also I would like to make my dream to come true. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to JICA and all persons concerned. "IRO IRO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA."

Warmth

Cica Ali
Agriculture Group

This was my first time to Japan, "the land of rising sun" and "the land of cherry blossom." Welcomed by strong summer sunshine at the Kansai International Airport, we recalled the name, the land of rising sun.

Like the sunshine, will people we meet welcome us? We worried at the beginning of our programme.

"Ohayogozaimasu (good morning)" greeting each other with this warm ward became our custom. We were also warmly welcomed at all the places we visited, Osaka, Tokyo, Matsuyama, Uwajima, Hiroshima and Kyoto. We obtained lots knowledge on agriculture, forestry and dairy farming from reliable and gentle farmers and researchers working for respective fields. Earnest and kind Father, Mother, Grand Pa, Grand Ma, brothers and sisters, and more over all Japanese friends concerned to this programme, thanks to all of them that our stay became comfortable.

Now the final greeting of "Ohayogozaimasu" is coming. I got answers for questions I had at the arrival time. All the people we met in Japan are earnest, reliable, gentle and warm and they presented us dream-like days. But now it is time for us to return from the dream.

We are leaving with summer sunshine to Indonesia. Like our friendship between Japan and Indonesia, warm sunshine is shining.

My Memorable Occasion with My Host Family

Lalla Saphira Murni
ASEAN Comp.
Economy Group

First of all, I would like to thank Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). I am from Economic Group. I am so proud to be here. This programme is one of the best things that has ever happened to me and it gives me a chance to develop myself, strengthen my interpersonal skills and a global exposure, to meet new counterparts in Japan, and to have a good time to exchange ideas, but this programme only has one drawback; there is no second chance at it.

One important programme that no one would ever forget was the Homestay. Many of us became the kids or brothers and sisters in the host families again. This is the best way of knowing Japanese society in success, lifestyle, tradition and culture, and then this wonderful thing is hard to get an experience.

My expectation from the home stay programme was to learn about Japanese culture and society. While I was staying with my host family, I was really surprised when my host family tried to realize my dream. I was given a chance to wear Kimono for the first time in my life. I cannot imagine how happy I was at the time. One more thing is that I was really surprised when my family gave me the Kimono that I really wore as a souvenir. I am really fascinated with Japanese culture especially Kimono custom.

We sincerely hope that the time and experience we shared and learned, and the friendship we built can further develop our existing ties and thereby contribute to 21st century for Asia and to peace and harmony.

■ Asia

■ Laos

Social Welfare for Persons with Disabilities

Khamsene Sayavong
ASEAN Comp.
Social Welfare Group

During the Youth Invitation Programme, we gained some experiences as below:

The social welfare system in Japan is very complete and accessible for the person with disability.

Many rehabilitation centers and schools were built and opened for the different kind of person with disability.

Referring the Japanese government law for the person with disability, after they have trained at schools and center as well as receiving the certificate, all of them can find a job 100% in private sectors.

The person with disability has significantly to take part in the process of development regarding to their talent, capacities and abilities.

Regarding to the strategy plan for person with disability of Lao PDR, we intend to combine the experiences gained from Japan such as vocational training and to find a job for them.

Memories in Ageo City

Lee Sang Xaya Xang
Finance Group

I had an indescribably striking experience through this programme. During the local programme we paid courtesy calls to the mayor of Ageo City and Municipal Assembly as well as the governor of Saitama Prefecture. We had interesting conversations there. We were also given an informative lecture on the economy and social system in Ageo City and Saitama Prefecture. The opportunities to exchange with local people where we were welcomed as family members were also given. The most memorable event was the Homestay Programme. I could not imagine that Japanese are so humble.

My host family welcomed me warmly, introduced me to each member and shown around the house, then we enjoyed exchanging our views. Through talking with the family members, I learnt good parts of Japanese society and culture, Japanese attitudes such as thoughtfulness toward others or open-mindedness toward people from other countries. And we mutually understood each other.

The farewell party was impressive. Tears were dropping all of our faces. The both Laos participants and the host families were feeling loath to be separated. It was just like a separation of real family members.

I thank to all the persons concerned to this programme. I strongly hope that the relation between Japan and Laos will be deepened.

■ Asia

■ Malaysia

Participating in JICA's Youth Invitation Programme

Zainol Ahmad
Teachers (Secondary School) Group

First of all, on behalf of our group I'd like to extend my gratitude to Japanese government primarily, and related people, all of which made great made efforts to succeed this programme. During one month stay in Japan we could get a lot of information's and many experiences as well, those turned out to be a wonderful memories to us. We came to know the today's problems on Educational System in Japan through group discussion and workshop with Japanese counterparts of same occupation as ours at In-house Seminar. We also talked about what is the best way to nature the next generations leading to the prosperous future.

Homestay Programme let us see the Japanese culture and their way of life closely. Their hospitality and kindness moved us much, through time is short. Then they gave many interesting chances of observation such as Ukai; at Ozu a bird named U-cormorant-catches fish called Ayu-sweet smelt-. The scene we first watch was very impressive. The observation tour to many bridges connecting between Honshu and Shikoku amazed us by the marvelous high technology. We were deeply touched at damages of war in Hiroshima, too. We realize how important world peace is. However, what makes us interesting is the Japanese society in itself. Japanese way of life and working attitude stimulated us enough to change the Malaysian working attitude and need the norm-reform.

Now I awfully appreciate my chance to visit Japan. Please give me another time to say in a loud voice. "Thank you so much."

Memories of Youth Invitation Programme

Mat lesak Bin Ngathinee
Agriculture Group

Through this programme, I have obtained extensive experience and fresh knowledge as well as agricultural technical knowledge, which may be used in Malaysia after my return.

The most unforgettable memory was the Homestay Programme where I shared time with the host family. During the Homestay Programme, I experienced Japanese customs (how to enter a house, table manner, and etc.).

Although there was a language difficulty with "Oka-san (mother)," we somehow managed to communicate each other. I missed Malaysian food, but at the same I enjoyed Japanese food, which is totally new for me, and it also became an unforgettable experience for me too. They also prepared one particular traditional cuisine, which is cooked mainly in winter season. It was delicious and gave me a very good appetite.

We also discuss on the both countries' social systems, cultures and daily lives. 65 year-old "Oto-san (father)" told me very informative experience of how to manage domestic problems as a head of a family.

All experience I had during the programme is significant. I would like put it to practical use when I go back to Malaysia.

My Most Memorable Experience

Kamariah Bt. Abdullah
ASEAN Comp.
Public Utilities (Tourism) Group

It is a great honor and privilege to convey my deepest and sincere gratitude to all that made this programme possible and fruitful.

This programme is a very noble undertaking which providing knowledge, experiences, observation, and understanding about Japan, its culture, people, food, heritage, high technology and history. The Homestay Programme is a good experience to know about the Japanese life style. The In-house Seminar provides a good opportunity of interacting and share knowledge to a better understanding about Japan. All lectures included in the programme are in fact very useful for us to bring back the knowledge to our countries and try to apply them.

Overall, this programme has given us a lot of benefits and knowledge especially in strengthening the friendship between our country and Japan. There are a lot of aspects we have learned in almost all fields, which include the culture and tradition, the working culture and technologies of Japan. We hope to apply the knowledge we have learned, a little if not all, into our field of work. The Japanese experiences are something that is unforgettable and will remain engraved in my hearts.

The Japanese Food Culture

Putra Nurwan Shah B. Baharuddin
Small and Medium Industry Group

I became interested in the Japanese food culture very much. They love fresh raw food or boiled one. They also prefer less oily cooking. The dishes are decorated to whet their appetite. Through the daily life with my host family I found that they were well arranged adding vegetables or fruits to the dishes and have balanced nutritious intake of carbohydrates and protein. I also knew that they have no habit to serve drinks or some sweets in a meeting, and that they only serve tea at most. That was my first experience. And they have no tea break in the afternoon. It is also their habit to have three meals definitely – breakfast, lunch and supper. Japanese tea without sugar is so popular among the people that it is prepared for meetings. There is also canned tea in Japan for the general people, and I found it is very convenient. I admit that the Japanese meals are prepared with enough consideration and its beverage contains less sugar. Such Japanese food culture is the origin of the people's good health, vitality and getting rid of obesity. I would like to take this culture little by little in myself, my family and my office.

The Sweet Memories in Japan

Noorhana Binti Yaacob
Administration Group

The Youth Invitation Programme has been admired by all the Malaysian public officers. It is because that we can have a chance to visit Japan and see her life and culture from such a closer distance, so I could not express with words how much I was delighted when I was informed that I would join this programme. And I am sure that the stay in Japan became most wonderful experience. And above all, my most impressive memory is my stay with a host family in Tarumi-ward of Kobe City. Although the communication with them was very difficult, we could share a variety of talking and experiences with them. It is a good memory that I put my Japanese language I had learned into full practice, sometimes using body languages during our conversation. And it is my good experience that I went to Himeji with them, and made some Japanese handcrafts. I was so interested in making them that I almost forgot the time to come back from Homestay Programme. And I was also deeply impressed by our

coordinators' devotion to their job and the attitudes of the Japanese counterparts we met in this programme. Through interacting with them, I have got the idea that even if a religion, a race and a language are different from each other, we can be one, after overcoming such barriers. I pray that these precious experiences and memories will be a nourishment of our development and also other people will be provided with these wonderful chances.

The Experiences in Japan

Nor Sham Binti Rahman
Local Development Group

The experiences during our stay in Japan will become an everlasting heartfelt memory which will be kept in my life forever. I remember the morning, when I stepped into this land for the first time, just as if it were yesterday. The stems of the cherry blossoms were in full bloom, and swaying, as if they were welcoming our seventy-six members of "Kohmuin-desu" group. "Kohmuin-desu" has become a common humorous expression among us when we expressed our group.

The raindrops were falling from the sky, as if they would bring a lot of happiness to us for the next coming programmes. I have heard from the Japanese I met in after programme that the cherry blossoms began to bloom two weeks earlier this year. Through this programme we could actually learn about Japanese life and society, such as the history of development, culture, art, people's way of thinking and the spirit. This will unite the participants and allow them to work together for the further development. We were deeply impressed when we learned how much people in Hiroshima suffered due to the atomic bomb attack, and the Minamata disease caused by mercury pollution. We hope for the everlasting friendship between Japan and Malaysia. The knowledge and the experiences through this programme will be useful, not only to myself but to the, people, religious institutions and our country.

■ Asia

■ Myanmar

Flower Garden of Education

Mya Mya San
Education Group

The most important period for luxuriant green is its raising period. For development of human beings and nations, the most important period is in our infancy when we obtain fresh knowledge. One nation's development depends on their education level. It is very remarkable aspect for the children of Japan who are torchbearers for nation's future that in Japan the compulsory education system up to junior-high is perfectly enacted.

Well arranged school system, plenty instrumentals in classrooms for music or science, swimming and other sports are instructed at physical training, all such aspects are throwing light on school life. Each prefecture has an education centre for training teachers. This system is interminably valuable for teachers. It is like as if you are possessed of a golden vase.

Boards of education perform tasks of reforming the education system for the purpose of nation's development. How students follow instructions or study and how teachers teach are in existence in "education." Hence, the future of Japan's education, where teachers being trained at "golden vases" of education centre utilize their outcome of the training for their schools, seems like a garden full of sagged branches with fruit and flowers in all their glory.

We should pay respect and follow punctuality, sense of working value, discipline and energetic behavior of Japanese. I would like to introduce these advantages of Japanese to children, who are treasures of our future. Students full of high spirits for nation's development surely pay strong interests in my experience.

A Fairly Tale in Japan

Abigail Venturanza Gregorio
Teachers (Primary School) Group

In my heart, I have always believed that fairy tales do come true. In fact, mine lasted for 28 days. My fairytale started last May when I came here to Japan. Fun actually started during our Nihongo Lessons. Our Japanese sensei (teacher) made it so interesting for all of us. Learning to speak basic Nihongo proved very helpful in visiting places on our own. It was also heartwarming to see the appreciation in the Japanese people's eyes when they'd hear us speak Nihongo.

Japanese people have great respect for traditional values. They continue to uphold what is true and beautiful—their love for culture by preserving the temples, shrines, hotels, and museums that explicitly depict what is authentically Japanese; their innate politeness for each person; their discipline towards work and studies; and their meaningful tradition of wearing the Kimono and slippers.

My dream of flowers, trees, birds, fishes, oceans, and clean air came true here. Love for nature is in the heart of the Japanese people. They also regard children with the greatest respect by providing them education that desires to realize the best they can be. School is really like home where they can stay longer and be with the teachers. Teachers really have the time to know each student well because of the small class sizes. And they even set aside time to just be with the students every week—they are free to decide what to do with their “bonding” time. The students are eager to learn English. In fact, it is now included in the curriculum of schools as early as kindergarten.

My fairy tale life in Japan ended on June 5. And like all fairytales, I shall live happily ever after with peace and beautiful memories of wonderful and scenic places like the National Institute for Nature Study, Karuizawa, Kenrokuen Garden, Osaka Castle, Hana Yuyu, and Kinkakuji Temple; of fun in Tokyo Disneyland and Universal Studios; and the magnificence of their fishes and dolphins at the Osaka Aquarium. And most importantly, my wonderful memories of Japan will always be the Japanese people—their love for nature, their respect for culture; their sense of humor; their great desire to be of service; their listening hearts; and the beauty that resides in the heart of each Japanese.

I hope that my dream will come true again—I'd like to be back someday—just to express thanks—for a most beautiful part of my life has just begun—to keep in touch with the Japanese people.

The Ultimate Tour Package

Jericho L. P. Reyes
Agriculture Group

“The ultimate tour package.” This was one of my co-participant's characterization of the whole programme. And why not? What tour in the world could offer informative lectures, breathtaking observations and heartwarming receptions?

Indeed, the neon lights and urbane lifestyle of your people had us in awe. Some of the agricultural technologies you have shown us, we could only dream of having, and the efficiency of your bureaucracy was one to emulate. Our view of Japan as a developed nation was kept alive and well.

But the second leg of our journey showed us a different side of Japan. Oh yes, we were still amazed by your agricultural successes, but it was the people who made the trip unforgettable. As the Mayor of Numazu had explained, although it is important to enhance one's economy and infrastructure, it is the development of one's people and their well being that should be put above everything else, a concept often lost to others in the mad rush towards industrialization.

If Japan were a human person, he would be made up by very different, but complementary body parts, and we were fortunate enough to see some of them. In Tokyo, you showed us your mind: tactical, efficient and accountable. In Numazu, you showed us your heart: charming, sensitive and generous. And in Hiroshima, you showed us your soul: bruised but undeniably resilient.

Ultimately, this should be the impetus for us Filipinos to also strive for self-sufficiency so that we too can start our own version of the invitation programme to show the citizens of the world the richness of our country and people. You have taught us that no earthly barrier: be it geography, language or ideology, could ever block the genuine goal of this programme: a better understanding of your country. And no tour package in earth can ever offer that.

Viewing Japan through My Own Eyes

Rowena S. Miranda
Small and Medium Industry Group

They say that one of the best ways to learn is by traveling to different places and exploring new things. My first trip outside of the Philippines made me realize how true this is. My 28 days participation to the Japan Youth Invitation Programme has opened my eyes to new possibilities and has widened my perspective about Japan's and Philippine's differences and similarities in culture. It has also given me many wonderful memories that would be difficult to enumerate.

The friendship gained, the new family found in Japan are just some of the treasures which cannot be measured but would always form part of me and remain in my heart. Many Japanese have touched my heart with their friendship, their eagerness to learn and to share and their willingness to help despite of the language barrier. There is always this overwhelming feeling deep inside me when I receive the courteous, professional and friendly services from hotel personnel, restaurant attendants, but attendants and even company presidents and employees for their warm welcome. My experience of Japan made me realize how generous, kind and appreciative most Japanese are.

Our youth exchange, home stay, company visits and even the lectures we had at OSIC (Osaka International Centre) taught me a great deal in every aspect of life. I admire the professionalism in which all of our scheduled activities were handled. Meetings and company visits were made at a maximum of two hours yet all the objectives were constantly met. The observance of time was very strict and on the dot that no time was wasted in anything we did. Our youth exchange were also worthwhile at this deepened our friendship with a lot of our youth counterparts in the different activities we had like the sports activity, butter making, the wood painting and the group discussion just to name a few. The group discussions at Shizuoka gave me a glimpse of Japan's rich culture and history as well as exchange views with our counterparts regarding our own countries. The museum we visited also made us appreciate the different eras and different lives in the past. Deeper understanding of our similarities and differences were achieved and I believe that this is just the beginning of stronger ties in the future not only among us youth but even stronger business ties with respect to our chosen field of work.

The visit at the Ecopolis Center and Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park made me appreciate two major things: love for and preservation of nature and the promotion of world peace. We learned so much in these two visits such as educating children at an early age of the ways and means of protecting the environment and to love and promote peace and renounce war forever. The trip to the peace memorial park was both an eye opener and a heart wrenching experience for me.

One of the best thing I truly admire about Japan is the ability to balance economic growth while maintaining a healthy environment at the same time. I have never seen a place as clean as Japan. In spite of the advance technology of Japan, I could see that there is not much pollution even at the busy streets of Tokyo! How could I

forget the beautiful, lush greenery whenever we went? There is not a single mountain where you could not see the beautiful, tall trees. The air and water are so pure, too. Mt. Fuji was simply majestic.

Experiencing how to make the Uchiwa, the tea ceremony and Zazen gave us firsthand knowledge of Japanese Custom. I could see that Japanese put their heart in their work and incorporate their culture on its people and products. I would always remember what I learned from the sharing of one company president about their traditional products. That is, each product they sell contains a meaningful story and tells of Japan's culture and history. This was every person not only buys the products but get to learn about Japan as well. He wished for us to do the same—to produce a product that is uniquely our own and would be reflective of our culture, history and society.

Lastly, if I were to live in Japan, I would choose Yamanashi simply because that's where I found my second home in Japan!

Japanese Mornings

Emmanuel Sto Tomas San Juan
Administration Group

Timeliness: being on time, being on the right time, anticipating time, and mornings characterize Japan. Almost all facets of Japanese history, lifestyle and culture are by-products of "time-elements."

The opening of the Japanese borders was just in time for acceptance of new discoveries then hounding mankind. The period of confinement from the rest of the world gave Japan the opportunity to perfect Japanese ways while awaiting the results of long studies for innovation undertaken outside.

After being exposed to new things, Japan never missed any moment of its time to learn modernity, and in no time, artistically coped up, or even modernized the modern.

The drive to cope up and to surpass the new discoveries gave the Japanese people the inspiration to work hard, and not to miss or waste anytime they have, or thought they left, hence the discipline of working on time and being on the place of work undelayed.

Foresight, foretelling what may occur in the future time, is another Japanese virtue. Forewarned, forearmed.

The difference of time/period in different areas in Japan is also noticeable. Walking on the streets, one will see old edifices sitting on modern places and vice versa, like seeing a shogun using a computer to instruct the daimyos, or seeing a robot dwelling in tree houses.

Mornings in Japan seem earlier, and are there awaiting the sun, looking forward to another wonderful time.

28 Days the Move: An Account on the Close Encounter with Japan

Rio Rosales Compra
Local Development Group

The year 2001 Youth Invitation Programme proved to be a worthwhile journey for all of us. Many have learned and many have been shared.

Through the series of orientations and lectures on Japan's experience in several aspects of local development, we were able to identify some areas for programme and policy consideration by our country's policy makers and development planners. The facility observations to private sector endeavors have impressed upon us the importance of partnering with private entities to promote and accelerate local development.

The Japanese government's utmost concern for the aged and disabled, as manifested by the operation of special institutions, reminded us that the concerns these groups must be integrated into the development process for total development is realized only when every sector of society truly lives in comfort.

The Homestay Programme in Tokuyama City left us with many memorable experiences. There we found the comfort of a home and the warmth of a family, which every one of us longed for.

The free times given to us to move around different places in Japan allowed us to see for ourselves the daily face of Japan and its people. It gave us several opportunities to polish our crooked Nihongo. Furthermore, it made evident to us that discipline is one of the major factors for Japan's rapid development. We saw that discipline has become a habit among the Japanese, and not simply a conscious effort to abide with the rules for fear of punishments.

On the whole, the objectives of the Programme had been met. It has not only enriched our knowledge on our fields of specialization but more importantly, it has provided us with an effective venue to establish friendship and exchange views with our Japanese counterparts.

However, we realize that the true success of this Programme is measured with the practical application of our relevant learning to our specific fields. We realize further that the complete attainment of the objectives of this Programme lies in our hands. Thus, our SAYONARA to you Japan comes with a promise that we will continue what JICA has started.

Farewell to you our FRIEND! Domo arigato gozaimashita!

MARAMING SALAMAT PO (Thank you very much)

Adonis L. Dantes
ASEAN Comp.
Health and Medical Service Group

Basically, Japan is well known globally because of its prestigious and efficient management system and advance technology. And these are Japan's edge over other neighboring ASEAN countries.

On my 28 days educational trip tour to Japan, there were many experiences that had helped me enhance the understanding of your people and society. The very warm gestures of welcoming us to those certain places we visited. The exchanging and sharing of ideas to our counter parts, facility visitations and much more so with the home stay even just for an ample of time, constituted the best bonding, understanding and uplifting the spirit of camaraderie among us. Nevertheless, to my co-ASEAN participants too, with the whole hearted and enthusiastic support of course by our respective programme coordinators. I also have gained a lot of skills, knowledge and attitudes that had helped me developed to be more mature, responsible, dedicated and dignified person in terms of my professional career as a nurse health education and promotion officer in our province of Misamis Occidental. With this Youth Invitation Programme, probably much less technology I may share to have it in my country and work place, but the very efficient system, hard working attitudes, good time management and the best practices strategies in the programme implementation is much expected to be contributed for the betterment if not the best pattern to be replicated, because I know that these are all physically, morally and culturally acceptable by my constituents.

My overwhelming thanks to JICA and the Japan Government.

"MARAMING SALAMAT PO AT MABUHAY KAYO'NG LAHAT!" (Thank you very much and long live to all of you!)

■ Asia

■ Thailand

Immeasurable Gifts

Chalinee Chogchit
Rural Administration Group

All my obtained knowledge during the programme, on Japanese culture, customs and language is an immeasurable gift for my life.

Now OSIC (Osaka International Centre) is my second home. We studied the basics of Japan and its language continuously, every day but no one get tired.

We were given a lecture on "one-village one-product campaign" in Tokyo. Although we had the lecture on the same subject in Thailand, and have little knowledge on it, the lecture in Tokyo fully filled our thirst for knowledge. We also realized that we should work for the promotion of specialties in each area

We were welcomed by the host families warmly. Overcoming the language barrier we could understand each other. At the farewell party, thanking to our Japanese parents "Oto-san and Oka-san" we all wept.

Then after, we shed tears at the Peace Memorial Museum. Learning the tragic damages from the video we trembled with fear for wars. The atomic bomb effected scenes in Hiroshima captured our minds and brought us to hope the eternal peace.

Daughter of a Japanese

Saengchan Methatrakul
Rural Development Group

How would it be staying with unknown persons? You may imagine easily but only those who have an experience of it can tell how it is.

The most unforgettable memory is the Homestay Programme. Although it was a short period, I gained memorable experience staying with a family as one of their family members.

"Oto-san" (father), "Oka-san" (mother), a dog and I are members of our family. The dog keeps watching the house, waiting for us at home. "Oka-san" always treated me as her daughter. "Oto-san" taught me lots about Japan. I don't speak Japanese well but we enjoyed being understood each other by gestures.

Having an experience of Sa-do (tea ceremony) was also interesting moments. Each movement of Sa-do may work for self-enlightenment. And at this moment, I felt as if I were a daughter of a Japanese.

How much I have obtained from this programme is unfathomable. I would like to express my thanks to my "Oto-san" and "Oka-san," and hope that more and more people may have this opportunity.

Experiences That Have Helped to Enhance Understanding of Japanese People and/or Society

Chayakorn Piyabunditkul
ASEAN Comp.
Science and Technology Group

There are many people that have a question for Japanese people like "why Nippon can be a good leader in world economy?" There are many answers such as eagerness, intention, actually on-time discipline.

This is a good opportunity for all of us in "Youth Invitation Programme" to have a chance to learn about Japan's living style and society.

At first, we saw a process of working from JICA staff, coordinator, TIA volunteer, and actually from visited companies.

The second, we realized about Japanese's family, relationship hospitality and kindness that we got.

The third, we saw marvelous Japan's tradition in ancient ceremony such as "tea ceremony" and learned more about "yukata" – a Japanese tradition.

The fourth, we learned about group working, spirit, and intention from Japanese volunteers even though they were not familiar with science and technology field in their work.

And the last, we got a great experience to have a chance to sightsee Japan's historical places and things such as Kinkakuji Temple, Kyoto Imperial Palace in Kyoto and Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima that made us understand Japan's history.

From all above, we are also so impressed and got a great time that will be a great historical for all of us, too. Don't hesitate to say "thank you" to everyone that participate in this programme. It will be a good memorable friendship that we call "Never Ending Story."

Three Unforgettable Things

Prayoot Settaphirom
Small and Medium Industry Group

There are three unforgettable things I should mention here.

First of all, the staffs concerned made great efforts to make the programme enjoyable and fruitful.

Secondary, companies and institutions always gave us a hearty welcome. We had various new experiences at their places. We enjoyed for making "Soba" buckwheat noodles, and to bake a "Senbei" rice cracker with our own tastes.

Thirdly, the Japanese youths, our counterparts, extended us a very warm friendship. Their friendliness was more than we expected. We developed a long-lasting friendship in a short period of time. They were kind enough to come and see us all the way to Tochigi, and we enjoyed a happy reunion. When we were apart at a station in Tochigi, we promised to see each other again with tears.

At homestay, we enjoyed a daily life in Japan as a member of our host family. I won't forget this one-month, in which 23 members of the group worked together to make it valuable. Every one of us worked hard to perform our part as a goodwill envoy to Japan for the promotion of understanding toward Thailand. I wish the friendship between Thailand and Japan forever.

My Visit to Japan

Wedarat Navicha
Teachers Group

Japan is a country where you should visit once. She was the country, which has successfully been rebuilt from the ashes and ruins of an atomic bombing. And she has been producing many men and women of talent. As members of the Thai Teachers Group, we learnt a lot from her through our visit. We visited a private school, at where we learnt the Japanese educational system and teaching method. We also had a chance to share ideas with the Japanese youths. We found that they put emphasis on the development of children's ability to create their own life. We knew that in Japan a child right was to be respected. Special concern is given to the handicapped to encourage them to equally participate in the society with others.

Thank you very much for your friendship. We will try hard to utilize new knowledge and experience, which we obtained during our stay, for the development of our country. And we share information about wonderful Japanese culture with our people. The visit to Japan will be an unforgettable memory in our life.

Japan Through My Own Eyes

Chaiyaporn Thabthimthong
Forestry Group

Reckless deforestation resulted the rapid reduce of forest in Thailand and now its coverage is mere 40% of the land. Poverty drives scramble for natural resources and causes deforestation. The protection of forest is a tough issue in Thailand. I found that in Japan people understand the role of forest in the total environment. They know that environmental protection as well as wildlife protection is more valuable than making cash. They preserve the forest and make it use for the nation. I want to use the Japanese way of forestry management for the development of my country.

I had some knowledge about Japan through books, comics and television before I visit the country. But I found that what I knew was so little. A very warm welcome extended me by host families and persons concerned was more than I expected and very touching. Wherever I went, I always found people who have a strong sense of responsibility and discipline. The level of development is different between our two countries while friendship and sincerity is common. I will treasure the memories in Japan and never forget.

■ Asia

■ Viet Nam

Hearty Gratitude

Truong Thi Hong Hanh
Education Group

One month of the Youth Invitation Programme has flow so fast. Japanese tradition, rice-cultivation culture, favourable climate, rich nature, warm hospitalities, tenderhearted people, all such characteristics common to both countries healed our homesickness. 28 days are not enough to learn about Japan and its people deeply and completely. But all experiences we gained in graceful beauty of Osaka, modernized Tokyo, poetic Yamanashi, Shizuoka with majestic Mt. Fuji, quiet but sentimental Shimane, peace city Hiroshima and ancient city Kyoto will remain our minds.

It was one of rainy days of the rainy season, when we arrived at Tokyo. The programme coordinator presented us very useful thing. It was an umbrella. When our aeroplane landed at Izumo Airport, we found our national flags were being waved. Warm hospitalities, bouquets, greeting in Viet Nam language, a welcome banner written in Viet Nam language and reliability and thoughtfulness of coordinators, Japanese participants and host families, all moved our hearts. Copies of letter written by Japanese participants, which confirms of our beautiful friendship were give to all the Indonesian participants. This will be our lifetime treasure. I would like to express our hearty gratitude to all whom concerned to this significant programme.

Impression of Japan Through the Youth Invitation Programme

Thai Chau Bau
Civil Servants (Social Welfare) Group

It is rather difficult for me to describe my impression on the programme, since the period of the programme was very short. However I would like to remark on some of my experience.

Japan and its people. Japan recovered rapidly from the damages of the World War II and well developed. I perceived that contribution of diligent labour of senior people led Japan to join the G7 countries in the early stage. Japanese are friendly, reliable and well disciplined. I have a very good impression of Japanese.

The programme was well and detailed prepared. The plan, schedule, itinerary and even supporting system are well organized. Training, discussion, exchange programme, and observation, all such are rationally combined.

The Homestay Programme gave me a special memory. It was marvelous. Although it was only 48 hours, it will be unforgettable commemoration for my life. I introduced "Canh Chua" (sour soup) to my family. I tried my best to cook it using prawns, fish, tomatoes, cabbage, bean sprouts, okra, chilies and celery. When they told me "Oishiidesu (tasty)" I could not express how happy I was. Four of us, the elder brother, elder sister, Kakuji (a boy of the family) and I stayed together for our first time but spontaneously we found a congenial spirits among us as if we had known each other for years.

Lastly, I would take my oath that I will responsibly contribute myself for our country's development utilizing my precious experience in advanced Japan.

Memories of the Tour

An Dinh Dooanh
Agriculture (Rural Development) Group

When I faced to Japan and its people, I realized that my dream has finally come true. We have visited five prefectures, Osaka, Miyazaki, Hiroshima, Kyoto and Nara. In every place, agriculture is well developed and at the same time historical culture of Japan is well reserved. We were welcomed friendly and warmly in every place. I have deeply impressed by strength of Japanese people's will and mentality, which was observed through the lectures and visited facilities. Japan has recovered from the total damages from the war and rebuilt it as the strongest country in the world. Japanese has done all such great work by themselves, by their own hands and knowledge.

The beautiful memories of the host family and participants of the In-house Seminar will remain in my mind throughout my life. How could youths of two countries who have never met before understand each other so deeply? We have overcome many difficulties and differences of language, culture or costumes. The same oriental background we, the both nations have worked for our friendship a lot.

During the one-month stay in Japan, I have learnt so many things, such as organic farming, agricultural cooperative associations, economics in rural area, activities for the one-village one-product campaign and more. I would like to utilize my experience obtained in Japan for my work.

Impression of Japan

Tran Thi Thu Phuong
Economy Group

It was a great opportunity for me to participate in this Youth Invitation Programme.

Japan is a rich country, which made a striking economic growth after the war, became a producer of high quality products and has diligent workers. With a strong desire of seeing and learning about Japan and of having

experience of memorable exchange with Japanese, I have arrived at Japan. Although our stay in Japan was a short period, I could obtain better understanding on the systems of Japanese small and medium enterprises and the Japanese sense of responsibilities to their work.

Even for my small question, the person in charge on a lecture came to me later on to give us detailed explanation. I was deeply impressed.

But through this programme I found that Japanese females are not treated properly, and I think that Japanese males should help females to utilize their abilities fully.

I would like to utilize my experiences in Japan for my work and also would like to spread my fresh knowledge on Japan to my friends. My memories of Japan and its people will never fade out.

Japan's Right Choice

Ha Hong Ha
ASEAN Comp.
Environmental Protection Group

What I want to show is my respect and high appreciation to the Japanese people. During our journey to Japan, I never saw anybody aggressive or angry. They look so gentle and friendly especially Kushiro people. On our tours to temples and cultural places in Hiroshima and Kyoto, I can see how great Japanese people show respect to history and nation founders. Perhaps, they are building a civilized society based on Japanese virtual values and standards with countless efforts to preserve environment and cultural legacy. They create robots, artificial island, and many wonders, which make them, go ahead the time, that also means they will have to face with many new challenges and difficulties and they must find the right way to lead the people to a bright future. Different from other western developed countries, Japanese people do their best to gain two objectives, development and friendship with all nations in the world. I deeply understand this view when visiting Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Dome and Peace Memorial Museum and through talks with Japanese young people in Hokkaido and Osaka.

Peace and prosperity are their choices, and I think they have made a good choice, and they have succeeded brilliantly which make the world so surprised. If one travels through Japan by Shinkansen, he will understand their power, and in fact, Japanese people are much more powerful than this. Congratulations!!

Long Life Viet Nam- Japan Friendship.

■ Asia

■ East Timor

Okinawa in Japan

Valentin Spinola P. M. Soares
Youth Leaders Group

As a youth leader, I learnt a lot through my one-month stay in Japan under the Youth Invitation Programme sponsored by JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency. Interaction with Japanese people in various fields gave me valuable experience for training young people in my home country. I was given opportunities to visit various places in Japan during my stay. The most touching and impressive visit was the one to Okinawa. I found that the people in these beautiful islands were longing for peace while they were suffering from the U.S. army bases in the islands. The people's appeal for the objection to existence of the bases filled my heart with grief.

One more very moving visit was to Hiroshima. I recognized that in the City of Peace there were people who were working hard to realize world peace.

Wake up Okinawa.
Never fall asleep.
Your future rests in your hands.
I love Okinawa.

■ Asia

■ Bangladesh

What We Learned in Japan

MD. Abdul Latif Sheikh
Social Welfare 1 Group

From the Youth Invitation Programme-2001 (An Overseas Friendship Programme) of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), we have learnt the social activity, culture and people of Japan. By visiting a number of social welfare institutes, we have experienced the nursing for the child and elderly persons, the training and rehabilitation of disabilities, the medical insurance and so forth. From home stay, In-house Seminar and other programmes, we learn that Japanese people are labourious, liberal, peaceful, timely and friendly.

In Aichi Prefecture, we are just thrown into practical field, from where we come to know the initiative of Japan Government. To provide health to citizen, to save the children, to rehabilitate the disable, to employ the unemployed, to educate the students with modern theme and policy. These experiences will help us much to understand the need of people whom we serve from our field of social welfare.

So many informations we have gained through the programmes that we can apply in respect to our country, Bangladesh. At Kanden-L-Heart and Aichi Prefectural Colony we observed the disables working as the ables. We can suggest our government to make our disables as state asset instead of state burden. The nursing experience for the child and elderly person and the insurance system we can implement to our society. From a close vision we experience the labourious, peaceful, timely and friendly nature of Japanese. These we must establish in our personal and social life to make us more dutiful and disciplined.

Golden Experience of Youth Invitation

Swapan Kumar Halder
Social Welfare 2 Group

Youth Invitation Programme is an extraordinary arrangement to enhance understanding of Japanese people and the society. As a participant of the 20th batch I am proud enough as my group and I have got chance to understand peace-loving, cooperative and sincere people of Japan through JICA programmes such as Homestay with Japanese traditional families, In-house Seminar with the young people of Japan, cultural workshop and exchanging views with the people of Tokyo, Osaka and Hiroshima as our counterparts were sincere enough to make us know the socio-cultural heritage of Japan. On the other hand getting very informative lecture on social welfare organization like Palette Supporting Organization, National Rehabilitation Center, Senior Citizen Center and Day Care Center, we could enhance knowledge related to our professional field. Brail dotted infrastructure network and quota for the disabled in employment are highly appreciable social welfare programme of Japan could be a milestone of social service in Bangladesh. We will convey the golden experiences to our home to develop our social services. Social service group of Bangladesh will broadcast also the songs of peace of Japan to stop war, friendship, sincerity and punctuality of the people to the people of Bangladesh. The duration of the programme is short but I am confident that the positive impact of it will last forever to abridge the people of Japan and Bangladesh and the experiences will keep on play an important role in nation building and leader. Live long Japan! Live long JICA!

Report on the Youth Invitation Programme-2001

Krishnadas Anilkumar Thishempully
Agriculture Group

The culture of any country is best-understood if it is experienced first-hand. The JICA agriculture programme ought to give an overview of the Japanese agriculture and also to give a glimpse of the rich culture, tradition and the way of life of Japan. Although the time was short, the programme helped us to get a deep understanding of the life of the farming community, the working of agricultural co-operatives, the marketing mechanism and the excellent backward and forward linkages in the agricultural sector.

The cold weather of Obihiro, where we stayed for two weeks, was never felt because of the warmth of the lively people of the town. The homestay, a corner stone of the programme, gave us an insight of the life of the Japanese people. The In-house Seminar was an opportunity to learn and appreciate the various facets of the Japanese way of life. The frank exchanges both inside and outside the seminar (while playing park golf, cultural programmes etc.) helped us understand Japan better. The visits to Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima was enriching, however it was felt that the duration of the visits should have been longer.

The modern technique used in farming, the working of agricultural co-operatives and the strong backward and forward linkages in agriculture will be sure of the learnings which every member of the group will try to emulate in India. The fond memories of the programme will be cherished by all members of the group.

Japanese Infrastructure and Character

Anil Malik
Education Group

This four-week training has helped the whole batch immensely. It has come as an eye opener to many of us from a developing country. Japan has created an unprecedented infrastructure, a great society and a very peace-loving and disciplined population.

The educational system has played a tremendous role in shaping the Japanese society, as it exists today. The very foundations of the Japanese world-view are laid strongly in the early years of schooling. Courtesy, impeccable manners, care for others, group feeling, discipline etc. are imbibed by the students.

Our homestay helped us to really understand the Japanese culture fully. Eating style, the big bath and general sharing of many things impressed us.

India can learn how to rise from the ashes of World War II and become an economic powerhouse like Japan in 30 years. For that, we will have to bring our moral character to the level of an ordinary Japanese.

■ Asia

■ Maldives

The City of Peace

Aishath Habeeb
Teachers Group

Hiroshima, being famous throughout the world, is one of my most wanted destinations. I have been dreaming about visiting this historical city since childhood.

Finally on 11th October I arrived Hiroshima, a completely different city from what I have been thinking about. I couldn't believe my eyes. After the atomic bombing, only a miracle can change the whole city so perfectly. But it is indeed a miracle. Hiroshima is now completely changed.

Visiting the peace memorial park and the museum was like witnessing the tragic A-bombing in real life. The remaining parts of the victims and the movie about A-bombing brought tears to my eyes, thinking of the innocent people who lost their lives only within a blink of the eyes. Standing on the bridge just near the A-bomb dome I recalled how this beautiful city would be 56 years ago.

I wish all the people of the world could visit this city of peace and to think about the disasters of an atomic bomb. The use of nuclear weapons from the world should be stopped, for the world is owned not only by those who possess power, but the world is a place for all the people on it. So let us all try to make our world peaceful and war free.

■ Asia

■ Nepal

Japanese Society and the Youth Invitation Programme

Mithai Lal Harijjan
Education (School Health) Group

The Youth Invitation Programme sponsored by JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency, under the auspices of the Government of Japan is a wonderful programme for the promotion of friendship of the world. I was confident that we developed a close and long-lasting tie between our two countries. We discussed various problems and shared ideas with our Japanese counterparts at the In-house Seminar. We learnt a lot about Japan and her traditional culture through home stay, and visits to various institutions as well as places of historic interest.

It is no exaggeration to say that Japan is a country of school to educate discipline. Genuine experience is only attainable through extensive knowledge. It is said that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory. A genuine experience can be attained only with broad study and practice. We knew about Japan and her people through books and mass media. However, we found real Japan and got first-hand information through this programme. We understood the characteristics of her people who value courtesy, and found an aroma of her culture. Every characteristic, such as advanced technology, equal opportunity, punctuality, a sense of mission, hospitality, history, culture, natural preservation, etc., was deeply engraved on my mind.

Clean environment was also impressed me very much, who is engaged in health education. I found with great interest a school cleaning by children, health education as a compulsory subject and a nutritionally balanced school lunch. I knew that well-made physical education was also to be a great help for children's health. Using materials and measures, which I can obtain in my country, I will utilize my experience in Japan in my society. I promise that I will work hard to develop our country for all my life.

World friendship, the concept of which was established at the French Revolution, is surely rooted in Japan. If every participant of the Youth Invitation Programme determine to brings back the spirit of the programme and extend it to people in home country, we would be able to approach the goal of world peace step by step.

It was very fruitful for me to have an opportunity to exchange opinions as to both countries' culture and courtesy to develop mutual understanding through those programmes, such as the In-house Seminar, the Friendship Evening, a sport activity, a welcome party at a local area, a homestay, a bowling game, etc. I believe that a friendly tie between our two countries will be deepened through this kind of programme. I promise once again that I will surely share what I learnt in Japan with people in my school, society and my country.

■ Asia

■ Pakistan

Japan, the Land of Rising Sun

Alam Zeb Khan
Local Administration 1 Group

Japan, the land of rising sun, is really great in culture as well as in technology. This visit to Japan has provided us the great opportunity of understanding the Japanese culture, society, life and system of governance. From the very first day we are feeling that if we are in a fantasyland as everything is so much fascinating and absorbing.

We found here the opportunity to see the three tire system o government, by visiting the National Diet, the Metropolitan/Prefectural and District Governments. The various visits to the government offices and other facilities and the Lectures there were very interesting and informative. Through the In-house Seminar, in the shadows of Mount Fuji, we made a lot of friends in Japan. Our stay in Shizuoka was icing on the cake and will be remembered by the whole group. The home stay in Shizuoka Prefecture was a wonderful experience of our lives as we saw the Japanese families and their way of living fro the inside. Attending the tea ceremony and wearing the Kimonos were exciting experiences.

The visit to Hiroshima has made us aware of the catastrophes of the nuclear weapons and has compelled us to pray for the elimination of nuclear weapons form the face of the earth.

Our visit to Japan has laid the foundation of personal friendship with dozens of Japanese friends. This friendship will become deeper than the Pacific and higher than Mount Fuji with, the passage of time.

The programme was well-timed, well-managed and wonderful in every respect.

Experiences That Have Helped to Enhance Understanding of Japan People and/or Society

Asim Imdad Ali
Local Administration 2 Group

The best experience during the programme was the stay at Takikawa, Hokkaido. Before the group left from Tokyo for Hokkaido, everyone had been commenting about the "remote frozen" island. But the most striking feature of the HK visit was the evenness of development. Even the smallest apartment in Takikawa or a tiny Buddhist temple, in Otaru on the Sea of Japan enjoys virtually the same living standards which are available to the residents other aspect which created a lasting impression in the minds of each participant is the hospitality and warmth of the Japanese people at every place, especially of Ginza in Tokyo.

The Hokkaido. We did not see the cosmos flower due to heavy snow of winter, but we saw all its colors in the faces of people of Takikawa. Before going to Hokkaido we had seen the strength of Japan, its systems, economy, democracy, but in Hokkaido and its people we saw the spirit of Japan full of courtesy and warmth.

We feel that the critical factor behind Japanese success is the 135 years of intense investment in development of its human resource. It is the well educated and highly skilled people of Japan who have strengthened its main pillars: economy, democracy and cultural traditions.

■ Asia

■ Sri Lanka

My Experience in Dairoku Junior High School under the Youth Invitation Programme

Wijekoon Herath Mudiyanseelage Ayanthi Samudra Wijekoon
Mathematics and Science Teachers Group

There were many experiences that I had under the Youth Invitation Programme. On this whole programme, Ueda programme is the most important one. In Nagano Prefecture at Ueda City I had a great chance to visit Dairoku Junior High School. I think it was very important for me because I got various kinds of advantages for my professional life. On that day, I had a chance to observe grade sixth science lesson. From that I could get some new tactics about teaching. When we arrived, the school students played our national anthem. After that, they gave us real entertainment about their culture. It was another chance for us to get better understanding of Japanese society and culture. Principal gave us a chance to move with children. I could exchange my views with students and learned some activities, for example, "Origami." Principal and the staff did everything for us. Principal gave some important facts not only about Japanese education but also for daily life. I'm very happy to say I could apply to my school work with my students what I got in this programme.

Lastly I would like to give my gratitude to JICA and Federation of World Youth Nagano for giving this golden opportunity.

■ Asia

■ Mongolia

White Heart

Narantuya Vandan
Local Administration Officer Group

The heart of the Japanese is pure like white milk
The rice the Japanese love is white
The mountain peak the Japanese admire is white
The flower the Japanese love is white

Noriko-san took us to this country from Mongolia
Whom we met as the first Japanese
We, Mongolian young people, came to this island country
Where we were treated as their brothers and sisters
Welcome! Let's study together!
Let's try hard! Let's foster our friendship!
They encouraged us
We recognized a "white heart" in their eyes
Of all we met in Japan including JICA staffs

The civil servants' commitment to the people is white
The commitment of the people to national development is white
The smiles of volunteers are white
The warm hearts of host families are white

Thank you very much for everything
I wish you all the best

■ Asia

■ Armenia

IROIRO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA! (Thank you for everything!)

Harutyun Torkikyan
Caucasian Countries
Economy 1 Group

First of all, on behalf of the Caucasus Components Group composed of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Japan, JICA, and all the staff concerned for your kind invitation to such a wonderful programme. Through the programme, we enjoyed interaction with the Japanese people, knew something new about the Japanese culture and economy. We were given opportunities to visit various companies, institutions and organizations to enhance our knowledge. Friendship developed with host families and the Japanese young people whom we met at the In-house Seminar and the visit to places of scenic beauty and historic interest, all these were deeply engraved on our mind.

This programme enabled us to foster friendship not only between the Japanese and us, but also among our people in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries. We decided that we would correspond each other back home and would play a role as bridge across our countries and Japan. The programme was really fruitful. We are very happy to bring beautiful memories of Japan and her people back home and never forget kind hospitalities shown by them. We would like to say this to the Japanese people. Thank you very much for everything.

■ Asia

■ Azerbaijan

Youth Invitation Programme

Etibar Abdulla Abdullayev
Caucasian Countries
Economy 2 Group

First of all, on behalf of the Caucasus Components Group composed of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Japan and JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency for the kind invitation to the Youth Invitation Programme. The programme enabled us to understand Japan, her culture and her young people. We made a visit to various places. Wherever we went, we got a new Japanese friend thanks to the Japanese language lesson before hand. I would like to express my gratitude to JICA for the successful completion of the programme.

I do hope not only our friendly tie but also economic relation between our countries will be deepened in the future. I also wish that JICA would open her branch offices in our countries in the near future to promote the relationship between our countries.

Mutual Understanding Through Culture

Djamalbek Turgunbekov

Central Asian Countries
Economy 1 Group

We knew little and had some image about Japan before our visit to the country. Our knowledge was very limited to Japanese economy and industry and almost nothing about Japanese culture and the life of her people. I would like to emphasize that true mutual understanding and cooperation between countries shall be developed through interaction of ordinary people. To understand the different culture and foster close relationship between ordinary people will produce true mutual understanding. I am confident that the objectives of this Youth Invitation Programme is essential to realize our friendly tie among us in Central Asian countries and Japan, which have different background. Through the programme our understanding on the Japanese people, especially young people, their mentality and culture was deepened. We could have many new friends, and this new relationship will enable us to develop a partnership in the future. The Youth Invitation Programme proved the concept of grass-roots establish world peace through our diplomat, which would be essential to establish true cooperation between countries.

My Participation in the Youth Invitation Programme

Zoirjon Ziedulloev

Central Asian Countries
Economy 2 Group

The Youth Invitation Programme was successful. We, the participants, were able to broaden our horizons, enhance our knowledge, obtained new experience, and develop our map of friendship. Every part of the programme was very unique, and made the whole programme meaningful and quality one.

I would like to ask JICA something to improve the programme in the future. More time and information on the programme shall be given in advance to make a participant prepared for it before departure. Considering the objectives of the programme, more time shall be allocated for interaction with Japanese young people, the In-house Seminar and discussion with them. I think that we need more opportunities for international exchange and free time during the programme. As to Homestay programme, it would be more enjoyable and fruitful if a participant could stay with a family, which has a member of same generation as the participant. The Japanese language lessons proved very useful. It would be more useful if the lesson could be given periodically during our one-month stay.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the persons concerned in the Youth Invitation Programme. It is greatly to your credit that you made such a wonderful programme.

■ Pacific

■ Papua New Guinea

Her Touch

Lydia Kaia
Education Group

Japan was beautiful at first sight

She was big, bright and the qualities she possessed were more than I had dreamed of.

Her tasty cuisines, unique cultures and tradition fascinated me most.

During my four weeks stay, I learnt new things about her every day as I visited places and met her people from different walks of life.

My perception was put under a microscope. I had thought that being big and fast, Japan would have been heavily industrialized and polluted. With her high living standards, she would be expensive in her sense of taste, color and trend.

But four weeks were enough to turn the tables; I began to understand why time was very important to her. I also discovered that her living standards reflected on her hierarchy world over.

Her people were well mannered, very formal, polite and warm hearted and very much interested in my country and me as I was in them.

It was amazing to note that despite Japan being the nerve center for the state of the art technology, her people were down to earth and very culturally oriented.

My contact with Japan has also opened a new dimension in my life and career as a journalist.

Coming from a third world country I have taken a glimpse of what life would be like in a developed country like Japan.

She had brought closer to my fellow Papua New Guineans from all around the country and from different societies.

But one thing that stands out most for me personally is that she has taken out my ignorance and replaced it with respect and understanding for a very important aspect of education in PNG; "Vocational training."

I now understand the concept of Vocational training and its importance. I can now compare and differentiate vocational training from Japan's to that of Papua New Guinea. I will try to promote vocational training with more attention and enthusiasm than I ever did.

But one thing for sure she has instill in me respect and recognition for others.

Lastly this 2001 Youth Invitation Programme has built my confidence as a Papua New Guinean and as a journalist.

Thank you JICA for making that possible.

In Touch with Japan

Jacqueline Kapigeno
Rural Development Group

My palms were sweaty and I had butterflies in my stomach. My thoughts were a thousand miles away and I dreaded the hour the aircraft would land at Narita International Airport in Tokyo. As I flew over the Pacific Ocean on flight JL 768 bound for Tokyo, the thought of setting foot on Japan was just too much for me. I had learnt about the country in school and with that knowledge that I gained, I thought I knew so much about Japan. Knowing that Japan was a well developed nation and a leader in the computer age and technology and a very powerful nation that ought to be feared, I was fumbled when I stepped off the aircraft at Narita Airport.

The sights that caught my eye were beyond imagination. I could only marvel at the thousands of skyscrapers that raced to touch the skies and the greenery that fought for space and existence down below. For a start, I was greatly impressed with the efficiency of workers and respect that every Japanese held for his own countrymen and every other visitor. My nervousness and anxiety slowly faded as the friendliness of every Japanese I met paved the way for more openness, discussion and friendship.

The times spent in Tokyo, Osaka and Hiroshima will always be treasured. The on-site visits, lectures, In-house Seminars and exchange and Homestay Programmes were so rewarding. They helped me learn more about Japan-its people, culture and economy. The highlight of my trip was the In-house Seminar at Lake Sagami, Kanagawa, where the bonds of friendship created between the PNG and Japanese youth will always be remembered. Hiroshima will always ring a bell of peace in my mind as I think of Japan's efforts in creating world peace.

My overall impression? Despite being well developed or "over developed" as one Japanese had once described Japan to one of my colleagues, Japan's culture and traditions are still intact despite the high rate of western influence among the young Japanese.

On behalf of my other 14 colleagues from the Papua New Guinea Rural Development Group, my sincere and heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in making this trip a success.

Never will we forget you all. Your hospitality and friendship, we will always treasure for you are the ones that make Japan such an impressive nation.

Thank you, arigato gozaimasu and sayonara.

■ Pacific

■ Marshall Islands

Youth Invitation Programme

Junior Kiona Lalimo
Pacific Comp.
Environmental Protection Group

On behalf of my fellow members from the Pacific Island nations (Environmental Protection Group), we would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have worked so hard to make this trip a memorable one. We also like to extend our appreciation to the people of Japan, the government and its leadership. You have done so much for us especially to our people and the Pacific Island nations as a whole. Indeed, this Youth Invitation Programme was a change of a lifetime experience. It has given us a unique way of understanding Japanese people and their culture. And, at the same time, we tried to build our capacity of the common social and environmental issues that we had in our Pacific region. We do hope that you will have wider and deeper views and understanding of our people and nation. Our hope is that from this programme our nation's friendship will grow stronger and closer. Finally, we have learned that Japanese are not only the best leader in technology today, but they are also the number one in the world to protect our environment. From all of this, we know you respect and preserve nature so clearly, for that Pacific Islands nation salute to you.

Thank you.

■ Pacific

■ Micronesia

An Islander in Nippon

Nena M.Tolenoa
Pacific Comp.
Economic Development Group

Not too long ago, an islander from "The Jewel of Micronesia" was given a once in a lifetime close-up of Nippon.

During his "life-changing experience," the islander managed to re-visit Nippon's historical and cultural heritage, fully experience the contemporary lifestyle and preview what is on the horizon in terms of technological and socio-economic advances and development.

Continually amazed and fascinated by experiencing many things for the first time in Nippon, the islander occasionally had to pinch himself to ensure his experiences were real. For the first time in quiet a long period, the islander's childish self was awoken and satisfied along with his professional and regular self.

The islander's greatest impression is how Nippon managed to be on the cutting edge of technology and yet still maintain her cultural heritage. The islander greatly admired how technology and tradition complement each other in Nippon's development.

On the lighter side, the islander had noticed that pregnant women and people wearing dark glasses (sunglasses) are not in common in Nippon.

Leaving behind the many new friends he has met, the islander left with a deeper understanding and fondness for Nippon and other neighboring countries in the Pacific.

The life-changing experience has enabled the islander to develop a deeper sense of appreciation for many simple things that he has taken for granted for a long time.

Before vanishing into his tropical paradise, the islander paused to pay his utmost respect and appreciation to the outstanding staffs and volunteers and the coordinating organizations and agencies in the 21st Century Youth Invitation Programme.

Taking a long-last look at Nippon, the islander whispered: "IROIRO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA."

■ Pacific

■ Palau

Brief But Memorable

Lulu Techur
Pacific Comp.
Social Development Group

Upon arrival, I was very nervous, thinking will I represent my country right? This was a question I always asked myself. But I knew I can do it with the never ending effort, assistance of our coordinators and their emphasis of being prompt, taught me the first and most important of being Japanese, punctuality acquired more knowledge to their respective fields, like myself. I have leaned a lot and based upon that, I will strive to improve myself in both my work and my family. Through this programme, I have learned so many new ideas in establishing effective programmes or systems and promote educational activities, which I will share with my people upon my return. I will cherish most the Japanese way of life shown to me by my host family. Honestly, Respect and generosity of the people of Japan is what I will always remember and I will share with my family. Before I always asked myself why Japan is like that? And now I know why. They strive to be the very best and united as one. And that is what all countries in the world should do. I learned that the Japanese do things not for themselves only but for the benefit of all the people of Japan. And again, I thank JICA and all people involved for giving me the opportunity to visit

Japan and learn of its culture, people and lifestyle. Thank you very much for everything. I will never forget this trip.

■ Africa

■ Benin

Admirable Characteristics of the Japanese

Charles Sossa

African Comp. (French-speaking Countries)
Health and Medical Service Group

I was lucky enough to be given an opportunity to visit Japan from September 4 to October 2, 2001 under the invitation by JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency. I would like to introduce you something what I learnt during my stay.

Firstly, the Japanese, who are famous for their hard working, never break a promise even in a daily life. This characteristic is to be of some help for the development of a country. We should put more emphasis on keeping promise in Africa like the Japanese.

Secondly, I found that the Japanese put a top priority in being punctual. The Japanese whom I met said to me, "Time is limited and precious. I don't waste it." From the point of view of the nation development, we are behind in this aspect. We, African, should be more time-conscious. Let's be punctual!

Thirdly, the Japanese love cleanliness. Through my observation during home stay as well as other opportunities, I found that this characteristic fostered at home from their childhood. This home training brings up a person who works hard to make oneself better and look for high quality.

Lastly, The Japanese are full of the spirit of self-sacrifice for others. I was deeply touched by a scene, which I happen to see in Kashihara City. Volunteers of old people were cleaning the road. Their behavior inspired me. Loving your nation should start from this kind of small step. Let's start from us regardless our age like those old people in Kashihara.

These are what I learnt in Japan. I believe we can practice these things in African countries, too. Let's start now! Let's fully utilize our time! Let's keep our place clean! Let's work hard!

■ Africa

■ Namibia

Before and After Coming to Japan

Sara Franzina Biwa

African Comp. (English-speaking Countries)
Female Teachers Group

Before I came to Japan, since it is a 1st world country that is highly industrialized, it would be very cheap to purchase things. After I came, this was quite surprising as everything was expensive. In the first days, I always converted the price before purchasing and realized that this would not work. It's just either you take it or you leave it.

I have learned and experienced that like our governments in Africa the Japanese government value education and both governments makes it a priority, thus education in elementary schools are free and compulsory.

Some of the challenges in schools are the same as ours and that as educators, we have a common goal in educating the future of the world and that we need to unite for the accomplishment of this goal, and make the world a better place for all of us to live in.

I've learnt a lot in Japan such that I used it in homestay even though we sometimes sat and stared at each other. Hence sign language proved not only to be used by those with disabilities. After visiting the temples, I came to understand the richness of the Japanese culture.

It is my hope that we will find unity through mutual trust and friendship.

■ Africa

■ Seychelles

Report on the Youth Invitation Programme – 2001

Jean Melda Lora Pillay

African Comp. (English-speaking Countries)
Health and Medical Service Group

The warmth in the relationship between the young Japanese and their elders has many to offer through their culture and traditions, which they have kept for many decades. I hope it will continue to be cherished by the future generations.

It was very pleasant to see that medical personnel work as a team to promote the high health standard in this country. We also visited the pharmaceutical company (Takeda Chemical Industries Ltd.) to see the production of pills.

Youths can obtain information that I've gathered from those historical sites visits. The most heartbreaking is Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Even though something sad happened in the past, the generations have continued their advance development.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to JICA, OFIX and all those who have helped us in every way to make our stay in Japan very fruitful. Thanks.

■ Africa

■ Togo

Japanese Hospitality

Mogore Arzouma

African Comp. (French-speaking Countries)
Mathematics and Science Teachers Group

You are anxious how to be treated when you visit a strange place. This was what I experienced before visiting Japan. I was a member of the African young teachers' group, which was invited to Japan by the government of Japan through JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency.

However, this concern instantly disappeared when I met a Japanese in Osaka. I found that the Japanese hospitality was out of respect for others.

Thanks to the Japanese language lesson we were given, I could communicate with my Japanese counterparts at the In-house Seminar in Japanese. I enjoyed for being with them, from playing a fruit basket to relaxing at a Japanese style bath, as if we were a family.

I received a heartwarming welcome by Mr. Ikuho Sugita and his family for Homestay Programme. I immediately became familiar with them. We enjoyed together for a sightseeing and historic spot visiting. The Sugitas treated me with delicious Japanese cuisine everyday. I was very sad when I left Tsuyama, where the Sugitas live, while my heart was very fulfilled with their heartwarming hospitality.

I personally experienced that hospitality was virtue in Japanese culture. The Japanese hospitality represents genuine affluence not only of the Japanese people but also ours who live in this globe.

■ Africa

■ Tunisia

The Peal of Asia

Aouini Hamida

African Comp. (French-speaking Countries)
Female Teachers Group

JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency, has been supporting under developed countries for many years, responding with untiring efforts to reduce poverty in their countries. I participated in the Youth Invitation Programme, which is one of JICA's activities.

Before I came here, I only knew that Japan was the advanced country in Asia. Through this programme I was able to see a real face of Japan. I enjoyed for outing with the Japanese volunteers in Osaka, and experienced Japanese daily life with my host family in Akita. In Chiba I shared ideas and opinions with the Japanese youths at the In-house Seminar. These programmes allowed me to observe the real face of Japan, the richness of culture, a high-quality education, and also various social problems faced by Japanese youths.

I learned a lot through exchange with children and teachers during the visit to educational institutions. I learned the reason why the Japanese are able to give their children a high-quality education without any cultural conflict as well as generation gap. It is attributed to the educational system, which includes computer education, various kinds of extracurricular activities, and nature excursions, home economics, assessment of children, etc.

In Akita we visited an ideally well-equipped technical high school, Akita Prefectural Marine Technological High School. I really wished we could establish this kind of technical high school to educate our children who would have a spirit of creativity and enthusiasm to work.

I believe that Japanese people will assist us to educate our people in various fields, because they are the people of good will and well educated.

■ Africa

■ Uganda

People Come Together

Richard Komakech

African Comp. (English-speaking Countries)
Natural Science Teachers Group

We left our countries with mixed feelings and different perceptions of Japan. Our warm welcome at OSIC (Osaka International Centre) made us feel at home. The general orientation programme enabled us to understand more about the Japanese culture, people, education system and language. We could not wait to apply. However, the language vanished in thin air during applications with Japanese volunteers on the move. Surprisingly, the language barrier drew us even closer to them as they struggled to guide us to have a good day. At the end of it all, one of us made a comment, "I cannot believe that people from different countries can be so united."

Our visits to educational offices and institutions of different levels enabled us to understand the importance of teacher training, easy to understand lessons, use of recycled materials, improving classroom facilities using IT, involvement of students in the discovery of scientific principles through experiments to mention a few. We saw students participate willingly in classroom, sports, culture and voluntary activities. "This comes from the Japanese culture of active participation in community activities with respect for each other," explained one teacher. In-house Seminar Programme ended sooner than it started. I made many friends and shared ideas with them. We waved to each other even out of sight.

We wept when we separated with our homestay host families. They accepted us as their own. They will always remain in our hearts. Kagoshima Kirishima open-air Museum reminded us of the beauty and the need for coexistence of man, modernization and nature. A new art piece being worked on by Sou gave a clear message: "Though our past has been dark, let us walk on towards a brighter future." Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum set up 'flames' of the desire for world peace in our hearts. This will continue burning.

We saw in Japan, "a big sister" with a desire for world peace and initiative to help us up on our feet. We are challenged not to forget.

■ Latin America

■ Ecuador

Co-existence and Development of Latin America and Japan

Chrystiam Cevallos Chavez
Latin American Comp. (Spanish)
Social Welfare Group

Many cities, such as Osaka, Tokyo, Aomori, Hiroshima and Kyoto, were willing to receive a party of 29 in all of Latin American youth. The Japanese society was willing to offer us various places, such as individual homes, schools, companies, temples, and even an ice-skating rink, for the convenience of our study about social welfare, world peace and national development for the period of one month.

Thanks to JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency and various youth organizations concerned, we were able to learn a lot, Japanese culture, ethics, sense of beauty, new knowledge through the programmes, for example, Learn Japanese on the Move, Japanese language lessons, home stay, and institution visits. At the same time we found some Japanese values, which should be said the fundamental of the society.

Wherever we went, we were received warmly. Whomever we met, from a city boy to an old lady in the countryside, we were taught how to enjoy one's life. Moreover, they proved us that we surely got friends in Japan.

Japan is a distant country on the map, but I know that mutual understanding would disappear the distance in our mind

■ Latin America

■ Grenada

Japan an Experience to Savor

Emerald E. Gordon
Latin American Comp. (English)
Teachers Group

Hurray coordinators! You have done a great job, and one I believe that JICA and the Government should be proud of. This trip to Japan is truly an experience to savor.

The accommodation was excellent. And the participants were a varied and interesting bunch, and thus created an atmosphere for the improbable.

The different programmes were well chosen. And thus provided the participants the maximum opportunity to learn about Japan, its people, its culture, and its education system.

The food to me was excellent. It was beyond my expectations. Before arriving in Japan, being someone who do not eat a number of things, I never thought that I was going to get so many things to eat. Mind you there were a number of dishes that I did not eat or like but there were always enough or more than enough to eat.

The places we visited were beautiful, interesting, eyecatching and intriguing. And were made even more special by the warmth, kindness and hospitality of its people. In my opinion the cities chosen for us to visit were all wonderful. The games we played were well chosen, interesting and fulfilled.

The In-house Seminar was one of the best activity if not the best, that was organized for this programme. It is an activity that I strongly believe should always be a part of this programme. On the other hand I believe that our Japanese counterparts should be better informed on what the seminar is all about and their role.

Homestay was an experience all by itself. It brought out the good, the bad, and the ugly. Yet in some ways it was very rewarding. It further emphasizes the cultural difference and language barrier between our countries.

In my opinion been here in Japan was a wonderful and rewarding experience. One that has formed long lasting relationships and memories that one will never forget. I also believe that this trip is a groundbreaking ceremony that will foster greater ties between Japan and ourselves.

■ Saudi Arabia

■ Saudi Arabia

The Japan We Saudis Saw

Raid Saud Qusti
Mass Media Group

To most Saudis Japan still remains an enigma. An economic force that produces the finest technology in the world and nothing more. This one-month trip has given us the opportunity to discover the Japanese character at a close range. To understand its culture, its traditions and lifestyle.

We have discovered that the youth in Japan share the same difficulties in Saudi Arabia such as joblessness. In both countries their idea and views often clash with the old generation. Unfortunately, in both cases, a sense of patriotism is lost. Recklessness and irresponsibility toward the future are the misfortunes of today's generation in both countries. However we have seen a genuine sincerity among its people that has no limits. Furthermore Japanese do not have a stereotyped image of Arabs fixed in their minds from their media like Westerners do. Therefore they respect you as a human regardless of your background.

The only aspect I did not like was that Japanese in general do not speak English, making it extremely difficult for tourists to communicate with them. I find that strange from people who have accepted the Western Civilization with its goods and bads. Even though Japan is a great world economic force, it should not follow the footsteps of America in terms of civilization. Who would want to remember a civilization of people who only utter "sir" and "ma'am" in the military and government offices?

3. Impressions by Japanese Counterparts

One Talk and Me

Koji Seike
Government Employee: Papua New Guinea, Rural Development Group

On the bus way back to Tokyo, we sung "Megusa" in chorus, taught by the Papua New Guinean youth. Our chorus seemed to never end, as we were reluctant to leave each other.

The national flag of Papua New Guinea has a bird of paradise as the national symbol on it. Through exchange with the youth from this "land of paradise," what most impressed me was their firm sense of mission. George, my roommate, enthusiastically explained his country's educational system till late at night. At the discussion group, we talked about environmental protection, such as global warming due to deforestation. Our discussion based on our respective economic positions; the Papua New Guinean as an exporter of lumber, and Japanese as an importer and consumer of lumber. Harry and Jerry, who explained us their government's positive counter measures to prevent deforestation, were eloquent of introducing us their government's superb policy.

Another thing that interested me was a custom known as "One Talk."

One Talk means a close human relationship, one even more intimate than the Japanese "Shin-yu," one's best friend. I also was told that it has a very powerful relationship. You offer utmost hospitality when your One Talk comes, and give full support in his difficulties. This kind of concept can rarely be expected in a big city in Japan, where a nuclear family becomes a majority and people have less interest about their neighbors. I feel some desolation in this situation.

Not only myself but also Japanese counterparts who participated in the seminar were able to have "One Talk" friends in a distant country. I am quite sure that this will be our lifelong treasure.

Wonderful Memories with the Pacific Youth

Kaori Aizawa
Medicines Analyst:
Pacific Component, Social Development (Health and Medical Service) Group

I was really happy to be in the In-house Seminar.

On our way to the seminar place, we enjoyed some games on the bus, which helped us to break an ice between us, Japanese and Pacific youths. At the bowling games, they surprised us with their skills even though that was their first time to play. And the games we played together promoted our communication. Their songs and dances at the Friendship Evening made us felt beautiful sea and islands in the Pacific. We, Japanese, presented a Bon-odori dance. Both Japanese and the Pacific youths all joined the circle and enjoyed the dance, which made us much closer in the feeling. "Ikebana" flower arrangement was also demonstrated to the music of "Sakura" cherry blossom, which is a Japanese traditional tune, played by "Taisho-koto" harp.

We exchanged our opinions and views as professionals of the fields at the discussion session. The discussion helped us to broaden our horizon in the health and medical services. I felt that we were able to notice the important things what we could do in the respective countries. I will try my best for the betterment of health and medical services.

The Philippine Participants Who Gave Me Clue to Enjoy Life

Kai Tsujimura
Company Employee: Philippines, Administration Group

"Let's enjoy this moment as much as we want. Because this moment is always 'this moment' and we never get back." I felt that this message was constantly conveyed from my counterparts during three days at the In-house Seminar.

I have visited the Philippines twice. Whenever I am in the country, I am almost overwhelmed and very impressed with their positive attitude and bottomless vitality under any circumstances. I found the very same characteristics in the participants at the seminar. They showed me how positively accept one's life. I learnt something very important from them.

I wish that they also learnt something in their way, which they wanted to know from this economic power, Japan. I believe that what they learnt will be of some use for both of us. Through heartwarming interaction with them, I was in the deep thought that an index of economic was not able to represent maturity of a country.

I can't tell the length of three days in one's life. When they saw how I felt sad to part, my Philippine friends patting on my shoulder and said, "Come on! Kai! This is not the time to say good-by but the beginning of our eternal friendship." I never forget them.

Interaction, Social Welfare and Our Future

Masahiro Muto
Civil Servant: Viet Nam, Civil Servants (Social Welfare) Group

On the bus for the In-house Seminar, I was trying to communicate with my counterpart, clumsily using a language book, which was given to us beforehand by the organizer. I couldn't express myself well in the language and it was so frustrating. I found myself enjoying slow communication by which both of us were able to understand each other.

My three roommates taught me some their language while one of them only taught me phrases useful for lovers. The costumes they wore at the Friendship Evening was so gorgeous. Their gentle air and smiles were attractive.

One question asked by one of them was very impressive. "You are in such an affluent society, how come you have so many social problems?"

In Viet Nam, children's problems are mainly child labor while here in Japan we have many, such as child abuse, withdrawal and juvenile delinquency. I noticed that the concept for social welfare varied by social situations.

I want to visit these wonderful people whom I met in some day. And I would like to communicate with them more to understand each other.

Cheers for Our Future, Dreams and Friendship

Hideo Fujiwara
Civil Servant: Indonesia, Small and Medium Industry Group

I am thankful for giving us an opportunity of participating this significant seminar programme. All the Indonesian participants have rich individuality with strong faith. They are avarice to live positively and gently. And they are jolly. Such their attitude stimulated me a lot.

I realised that we are enjoying fortunate life, but rather spoilt. We should not leave to other people but should work for our society by ourselves.

I also had a chance to have absolutely invaluable friendship through this programme. Not in the level of relationship between the both countries or races, but individual level, I would like to deepen our understandings. If a person and person had good company, our society will be better to live in.

Cheers for our future, dreams and friendship.

International Exchange Over the Sea

Yumi Kubota
Student: Cambodia, Agriculture Group

I participated the In-house Seminar for my first time. Contrary to my expectations that there might be a great deal of intercultural surprise, staying with Cambodia participants for 3 days, I have a delightful surprise to find that there are various situations where we share the similar feelings. It was very precious experience for me that I could feel the similar feelings with Cambodian participants who have totally different language, lifestyle, environment and etc. To put it concretely, we developed a rapport atmosphere through singing Japanese songs or dancing Cambodian traditional dances all together, in big one circle. I felt a sort of a sense of unity with them as if we had known each other for years and years. In this information society, I don't want to stick to prejudiced opinions but would like to have a wide, frank and barrier free exchange.

Participating in the In-house Seminar

Mizue Fujii
Student: Malaysia, Teachers Group

Although it was just 2-night 3-day programme, since I did not have any knowledge on Malaysia's situation, it was fruitful programme for me. Especially, I was deeply moved by their devout religious piety. For example, I felt sort of cooperative spirit among them learning that they are following strict rules such as performing 5 time prayers a day or their food restriction, which may too difficult for me to follow.

Malaysia and Japan are both Asian countries but differ greatly in social background. To have mutual understanding among such nations, I found it is important for us to open our minds and accept others as they are. There are so many things to learn each other, so it was very interesting experience for me.

Shall I Come and Visit? To The Country Where You Live, To Your Malaysia

Takahiro Maeda
Civil Servant: Malaysia, Agriculture Group

I decided to join the In-house Seminar without much thought, when my superior suggested me to join. But then I realised that I have almost no knowledge on Malaysia. However, the Malaysian participants speak both English and Japanese quite well, so I had very interesting days with them. Malaysian participants introduced and explained about their country without any difficulties. I was impressed by them. I was embarrassed by their questions about Japan. I keenly realised that I have small knowledge even on my own country. (But could you tell for example, the exact location of 47 prefectures or special products respectively?)

At the exchange party, they introduced us their traditions such as Sepak Takraw (Malaysian ball game), dance or simulated marriage ceremony and so on. Through such programmes I found that Malaysian participants have friendly and warm nature. Also I was presented many gift from Malaysia. After the programme, now I really would like to visit Malaysia in the future.

(This title was my Haiku, a Japanese poem of seventeen syllables I composed for the In-house Seminar.)

Saudis are Pious and Open-minded

Hideki Ogawa
Graduate Student: Saudi Arabia, Mass Media Group

I participated to the Saudi mass media group in house seminar held at the Sajima Marina in Yokosuka. On the way to the seminar venue, already the Saudi participants were so excited. The afternoon on the arrival day, we had a foot boll game for sport exchange programme, and they beaten us utterly.

Once the discussion session has started the Saudi participants turned to very serious. Every presentation, there were a storm of questions from them. Even at the exchange party, we continuously exchanged our views. Yes, they are professionals of coaxing opinions or views from others. Also from Japan, there were participants from the mass media field, journalists, specialists or researchers of specific areas, and etc. Japanese side too quite tough in discussion session.

They have enthusiastic interests toward Japan as an Asian champion. The bearers of the formation of Saudi public opinion were in Japan exchanging views with specialists and youth. This opportunity was very meaningful for them. But at the same time for us, for Japanese participants, too, having a chance to exchange with Saudi youth staying in our own county is very significant.

My New Experience

Yoshihiro Suga
Local Civil Servant: India, Agriculture Group

It was my first time to participate in the In-house Seminar of Youth Invitation Programme.

Our discussion topic at the seminar was "Equal Opportunity and Co-participation." As a local civil servant I have been careful about co-participation in my everyday work. However, I found that our effort does not recognize yet in the world, when participants from India commented that there was gender discrimination in Japanese society.

Three-day experience at the In-house Seminar was very new to me. Interaction with people in different culture and custom provided me an opportunity to recognize own culture once again and to get new perspectives. I'm looking forward to participating in a seminar once again in the near future.

Two Nights and Three Days Spent with the Sri Lankan Youth

Miyuki Yoshida
Arbeit: Sri Lanka, Teachers (Mathematics and Science) Group

I have been interested in international exchange since I was a student. I had some knowledge about JOCV, Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, of JICA, but its Youth Invitation Programme was very new to me. I participated in the programme's In-house Seminar of the Programme with the Sri Lankan youth and spent very fruitful three days.

The participating young people from Sri Lanka were very gentle and friendly. We enjoyed a very active discussion. We talked on various kinds of matters such as the life style, education, culture, etc. in both countries. Interaction with them stimulated my interest in Sri Lanka and led me to seek better understanding of their country and people. The volleyball match brought a pitch of excitement, the Friendship Evening enabled us to introduce and enjoy our traditional dance and songs. All these are an unforgettable pleasant memory in my mind.

What I Felt As Teacher

Wakako Yamagishi
Teacher: Bhutan/Maldives, Teachers Group

I happened to know about an In-house Seminar in my newly appointed town, Tomisato-machi and lost no time in applying to participate. Two motives urged me to do it; firstly both countries, Bhutan and Maldives are very new to me, secondly my daughter's teacher had visited Bhutan as a member of an orchestra, which was a very first foreign orchestra accepted by the country.

When we met each other on the first day, I was impressed with friendly smiles of Maldives' teachers. I found that Bhutanese teachers seemed to be bit nervous to meet strangers. Bhutan is a country of high peaks while Maldives is a country of islands in the Indian Ocean, the nature of two countries are very different from each other. However, I found some common aspect and put great confidence in them. They have been devoted to educate children who will shoulder the future of their respective countries. They showed a deep interest in observing classes and facilities during their school visits. They even challenged a computer operation for the first time.

I understand that Maldives is suffering from global warming, and their coral islands would be submerged in the ocean. Environmental education is essential and immediate need to preserve environment. Every one of us, who especially live in the advanced countries, including we Japanese, has to review our way of living.

Be Close to Friends

Noriko Iwashima
Public Health Nurse:
African Component (English-speaking Countries), Health and Medical Service Group

Many of African participants in the Health and Medical Service Group are engaged in the same field of mine, so that we were able to understand each other easily and enjoyed sharing ideas and common problems. However, I was shocked to know that 90% of outpatients in their countries were suffering from AIDS. It's said if AIDS is the first thing to be worried when you fall in love with somebody. I felt real that AIDS was more serious and imminent problem for them than we considered it here in Japan. Japan is a closed society, but I realized that it might work to prevent the outbreak of AIDS in the country.

We are in the same profession, however, what a difference in problems we are facing! They have heavy responsibilities to take, important mission to perform. We, Japanese, need to pay more attention to what's happening in their country, and try to recognize the problems with which our friends are tackling, even though we are apart in distance.

I will try hard to tell my friend about my experience at the In-house Seminar, so that they are able to know African countries through me while my African friends did feel Japan through me.

My Friendly

Eri Yoshida
Student: Thailand, Teachers Group

I thought that a participation in the In-house Seminar with the Thai teachers group would be a golden opportunity to broaden my horizons as a teacher-to-be. I am very happy to have yielded such a big harvest through the participation.

Soft sounds of Thai language, colorful traditional clothes, young peoples with attractive smile, who are enthusiastic and full of curiosity, all these fascinated me. We tried hard and managed to communicate each other using all kinds of means of Thai, Japanese, English, even body languages. Although we surely had the language barrier, we could produce a friendly feeling each other. We shared rooms and ate at the same table, such a very

close and dense interaction made it possible for us to foster a true friendship. I received e-mail from my friend in Thai recently. It says, "I won't forget a warm memory in Japan all my life. Please come and see us in Thailand." I'm really looking forward to seeing them in the near future.

Thank You and Good Luck

Takashi Ishii

Teacher:

Latin American Component (English), Primary and Middle School Teachers Group

"What, how and for what purpose shall I teach them?" This is what I often ask myself while I am busily occupied in teaching at a high school. This kind of ambiguity seems to be the basis of a variety of problems we are now facing in the educational field in Japan.

I think that the social role as teacher is to guide our future, namely our children, to favorable direction. To accomplish this mission, we need to have clear grasp of the present situation. Also we have to make ceaseless effort to enhance ourselves to the level of universal values. In this sense, I found that the In-house Seminar, which I participated, was very fruitful.

"For changing the world." This is what one of my counterparts said at the seminar. This word inspired me deeply and I won't forget it for the rest of my life.

I would like to say to you all, thank you very much and good luck.

Friendship Beyond the National Boundaries

Yukiko Awa

Civil Servant: Latin American Component (Spanish), Social Welfare Group

I had very fruitful three days at the In-house Seminar. In our exchange with youths from Latin American countries, every participant in every country showed his and her bright personality. Throughout the In-house Seminar, I felt that Latin people were very likeable.

On the second day we enjoyed a friendship party till midnight. We were deeply in the Latin mood so that we almost forgot where we were. On the final day we showed our cooperative spirit. Every discussion group made a unique and touching presentation, which included an introduction of each country's situation on social welfare.

We shared a span of only three days, short but very fruitful, and developed friendship beyond our national boundaries. I am confident that every one of us had a very precious experience.

Importance of Communication

Shiro Tago

Civil Servant: Mongolia, Local Administration Group

Although at the beginning of the programme, I was in anxiety whether I could understand their words or not, all such anxieties has gone when I met the participants and found their beautiful smiles and constructive behavior in them.

The most unforgettable moment was when we tried to be understood by each other using gestures and all possible ways but without any help by interpreters between us. It obviously took a long time to understand even just one small thing but harder tired we surly got closer and closer each other.

Through these three days we stayed with Mongolian participants, I learnt not only their culture or history but also so many various things from them. It was a very precious moments for me. I would be thankful to all persons concerned for giving us such opportunity.

Bonds through “Understanding and Sincerity”

Masaki Mimura
Civil Servant: Caucasian Countries, Economy 2 Group

I realized that understanding and sincerity are vital to deepen bonds of people. This is what I learnt through my participation in the In-house Seminar.

Young people from Caucasus countries cooked their native cuisine and treated us to dinner on the second night of the seminar. I really felt their message, which was conveyed through their efforts to cook for us. I interpreted it as “Please try hard to understand our people and countries” and “Thank you very much to you all.” The heartwarming dinner was a real treat.

I understand that a conflict between Armenia and Azerbaidjan has been continuing. But a scene I happened to see at the seminar told me that mutual understanding and sincerity would make it better. Young people from both countries had been enjoying talking over a bottle of wine.

I also enjoyed chatting with them using some English and Russian. These experiences inspired me a lot. I will try hard to make myself better.

4. Impressions by Host Family

Lon's Mementos

Kayo Hasegawa
Yamanashi Prefecture: Philippines, Small and Medium Industry Group

"Lon, let's go!" my two boys were clinging to Lon the whole day. My sons were so happy as if they got a big brother.

I was worried whether my 7 year-old and 10 year-old sons would get well with 20 year-old Lon, since this was our first experience to be a host family. But using broken English and gestures, Lon started understanding my sons' intentions. Soon they played together jolly like brothers, playing games or Shogi (Japanese chess) and making a snowman. I found Lon's tender-hearted and positive nature from his attitude.

We learn lots about Philippines' culture, life style and many things. But we realised that international exchange programmes accrue from relation between person and person and between heart and heart. This is the biggest harvest from this programme and what Lon left us as his mementos. Thank you, Lon.

Memory, Seema Left with Curry Powder

Keiko Hatano
Okayama Prefecture: Pacific Component, Economic Development Group

Indian-Fijian, Seema visited our house for her Homestay Programme. At the first, I was a little too nervous about the language barrier that I could not communicate well. But when we went for shopping and cooked chicken curry together, I felt our distance became closer and closer. She brought curry spices from her country. She had a plan to introduce curry, I found. "Fry onion till its colour becomes brown." "Which one is the hot spice?" "All of them." Forget about grammar or textbook, we had our own conversation. Since curry is an Indian cuisine, my mother and I ate by Indian way, ate with fingers following how Seema ate. Although I thought it would be very hot, the curry was mellow and fragrant. "Very, very, very good" when I told her so, her face was shining with joy. Next day followed her instruct my mother cooked prawn curry. Seema told us "Oishii (tasty)" in Japanese when she tried.

When she was leaving, she cared me telling not to cry. Say thanks each other, say "call thank you" This sentimental feelings might be felt only who had experience of a Homestay Programme.

Our Matilda is Strong

Reiko Konishi
Kagawa Prefecture: Papua New Guinea, Education Group

Matilda's home stay period swamped with our busy farming season. So we were a little worried accepting her. But She seemed to enjoy rice fields very much. It seemed she prefer to stay in a suburb area than in big cities. So when she was helping my husband with his work of harvesting potatoes her face looked so fresh. She tried bowling for her first time but already at the second game, she was doing very good at hitting pins. Her eyes are like those of a hunter facing to animals. Her enterprising nature lent a sparkle to our family.

I agreed to my husband words of "introducing our daily life is important." Our separation was heartrending that we could not help from crying.

Even now sometimes my mind is absent from my work and is travelling around dreaming of Matilda.

A Friend from Myanmar

Natsuko Hayashi
Gunma Prefecture: Myanmar, Education Group

I was looking forward to having a guest from Myanmar very much because I have a keen interest in Asia countries. I was happy to have her at my house. During her stay with us, she cooked a Myanmar dish for us. It was very first time for us to taste the dishes cooked with various kinds of spices. However, I found something familiar with a taste of soup with vegetable and rice vermicelli because it had a similar taste with my mother's vegetable soup. I also enjoyed for wearing her traditional costumes. I exchanged to wear my "Yukata" a Japanese summer time kimono with her "Rongee" a traditional Myanmar costume and took many photos with her.

We also shared our opinions and view each other. I was given an opportunity to think over the difference between our two countries. As we got to know each other better, our ties became deeper. This new experience surprised me and made me happy. Fortunately, I'm going to visit her country this coming summer. I'm looking forward the day to meet her again in sound health.

A Man Who Loves Summer

Takenori Matsushita
Ehime Prefecture: Indonesia, Agriculture Group

"Hi! Papa-san! Kon-nichiwa! I'm Rabin."

His pleasant voice and smile dispersed easily my anxiety of having a foreign guest for the first time to my house. At the dinner table his simple comment of "No problem" vanished my wife's anxiety of the tastes and brought up lively atmosphere. We asked various questions to him, such as about a life in West Timor where he lives, about his mother, etc. With a map in our hand, my wife and even my mother joined my daughter, the first grader of high school, to shoot one question after another at him using both baby talk and body language. We asked, got an answer, surprised, and laughed, like the first night was growing.

On the second day I took him to an orchard for harvesting an orange in a burning sun. He shifted easily from tree to tree in a very steep orchard with no sweating. He was humming in Japanese, "A man who loves summer has a strong mind—" He freely moved in the orchard with his sandals and sometimes tasted an orange, sometimes asked questions about the facilities in the farm. It seemed that everything was so easily for him.

He was very polite, intelligent, candid, not tall but vigorous. He reminded me of the Japanese in the Meiji era, whom American and European people admired. Three days with him made me reconsider my standing point.

Hadi, Thanks

Hiroyuki Omori
Ehime Prefecture: Malaysia, Teachers Group

Hadi-san brought a blast of Malaysian breeze into our house.

He presented me "Sarong" which he chose with his wife for a souvenir. I tried straightaway. Wrapped myself with a cylinder-shaped piece of cloth. It made me feel as if I were a Malay man. It was very interesting for me to see Hadi-san seeking the direction of Mecca, the holy city of Islam using a compass. We asked about his food

restriction, prayer time, and more and more. But he answered conscientiously one by one. I felt his pride toward his county's culture and enthusiasm for his country's development from his words. It was very fresh for me.

Hadi-san enjoyed "Sumo" on TV during his stay in my house. Hadi-san, let's enjoy "Sumo" at my house again. I am waiting for you.

Beautiful Journalist in Vietnamese Dress

Shin Fukuda
Osaka Prefecture: Viet Nam, Economy Group

Ms. Nhung is a journalist with pleasant smile. She is gentle, very considerate and polite. She also is a talented and intelligent career woman. She is a woman of today who creates her own future at ease. She is enterprising and fully utilizing a computer at her job. She seems to be confident in her profession. Through her I recognized that women's participation in her country is far more advanced than ours. Thanks to the new economic policy, the economy has been developing remarkably in Viet Nam. However, oligopoly seems to be prevailing in its industrial field. I wonder whether the competition in the field is relatively limited.

I wish her, who is blessed with both beauty and intelligence, all the best.

Three-Day with Nu-san

Kyoko Takahashi
Aichi Prefecture: Thailand, Rural Development Group

During three days when Nu-san was staying with us, we enjoyed each and every moment, cooking Tom Yam Khun together, enjoying "Oiden Festival" wearing Yukata (Japanese informal cotton dress), hiking in Kamikochi and etc. But just describing our experience is not enough. Something is missing. There was something I can not express into words.

Her stay was very precious for me. Although there was a language barrier between us, we shared our time talking about families, music, future dreams and also study, Nu-san and I studied in the same field. Being with Nu-san, my parents recalled their memory of Thai language little by little. And my brother and I recalled fading memory of our childhood stay in Thai Land.

I will be happy if Nu-san bring a sweet memory from our house. Thanks to Nu-san for beautiful memories.

See You Again

Hisae Kimura
Saitama Prefecture: Laos, Finance Group

This was our second time to be a host family. As like last time, this time too the Laos participant stayed with us speaks English fluently, so we could learnt each other on social systems, culture and history of each country. I was moved by her attitude and warm care toward my parents and grand parents. She learnt that nuclear family is now very common in Japan, so she seemed surprised with 7-member family of us.

We visited a neighbouring temple and zoo. At night, we enjoyed local festival wearing Yukata (Japanese informal cotton dress). Through festival dance or carrying portable shrine, friendship has expanded to our neighbours as well. She also introduced Laos's cuisine. We had a dietary interchange, too.

Separation was very tough, but my family and I had significant experience.

Merci ! Aminata and Elise!

Kumiko Sasaki
Akita Prefecture: African Component (French-speaking Countries), Female Teachers Group

Two guests I received at my home were very cheerful, friendly and pleasant ladies. They come from a French speaking country. Since one of them was a English teacher, she served as a temporarily interpreter during their stay at my home. Not only poor English of mine but also we used facial expression and body languages to make us understood. I felt that our communication was very successful during their two-night and three-day stay. We covered almost all the subject and made ourselves understood from the bottom of our hearts.

The most popular topic among us was about a male-dominated society in their country. We often talked about the topic as being housewives. Observing the relationship between my husband and I, they joked to ask me, "Come to my country to give them an advice." Also they teased each other saying, "You know, she misses her husband back home when she keeps silent." Our housewives' chatting was full of humor and really livened up beyond our national boundaries. Through the chatting I realized that "the housewives' feeling between Japan and Africa has no difference." I felt that the distance between our two countries seems to be much closer.

Precious Thing

Rika Tsutsui
Kyoto Prefecture: Nepal, Education Group

My family was waiting to receive guests from Nepal with a little anxiety and a big anticipation. On the very day when I saw them who were getting off the car, my anxiety suddenly vanished and I felt some kind of indefinable feelings of closeness and affection to them.

For next three days we spent ordinary daily life with them. We participated in a sport day at my son's kindergarten; took a walk near by seaside and farmland; cooked for a dinner together. We also talked various things together, from our families, custom, education to social problems. It did not take long time before we understood each other beyond the difference of customs and languages. Their politeness, mild and warm personalities impressed me. The Japanese traditionally value these things, which are almost vanishing from this society nowadays. I realized these things in them on the first day, so that I had such a close feeling.

Two silently left me some precious thing. Now a distant country Nepal became so closer in my mind.

Thank You for Lovely Smile

Miyoko Kudo
Hokkaido Prefecture: India, Agriculture Group

If you have sympathetic feelings to someone, you can make yourself understood beyond the language barrier. This is what I personally experienced as host family.

My husband was out of town on business. I was worrying very about being a host family with just my daughter, a six grader, and myself. However, my worries disappeared when I saw our guest's gentle smile at our first meeting.

She, Bhupi-san, was so kind to play with my daughter all the time. My daughter enjoyed playing cards and going to sing *Karaoke* with her. And Bhupi-san cooked Indian dishes for us. She was a good cook. I cook the dishes that she taught me now and then to enjoy the taste, which gives me pleasant memories of her.

"I will never forget you. I miss you." This is what we wrote in our native language that exchanged when we parted. As a host family I was able to meet a wonderful person and learnt a lot from our guest. This experience is definitely a treasured memory of mine.

A Friend from Bangladesh

Emi Ueda
Aichi Prefecture: Bangladesh, Social Welfare Group

This is the first time to be a host family for my family. We thought that being host family would be something enjoyable. We received a cute lady, Ripi, who was elder than me. Being with her for a few days, I found that how interesting to communicate someone else and how important it is. "Try to convey my feelings with all my might." It was very fresh to me since I was deeply immersed in easy communication circle, such as my family, colleagues, and close friends. I found it; if you try hard with all your heart, you could make yourself understood somehow regardless of your language ability.

Cooking together with her was most pleasant memory. Chicken curry cooked with so many spices and nuts of Bangladesh was superb. She said that she would invite me to her wedding. I'm looking forward the day promise will be realized.

A Wonderful Present to Our Family

Toshio Kawahara
Kagoshima Prefecture:
African Component (English-speaking Countries), Natural Science Teachers Group

When I heard the news that my town, Kawabe-cho, would receive visitors from African countries, I wanted to be a host family for them. The problem, however, is neither my wife nor I can speak single word of English. I asked Jeff, my foreign friend who lives in my neighbor, for help to receive Martin from Ghana.

In Japan there is a saying of "*Hadaka-no-tsukiai*," which represents "a heart-to-heart exchange," and "hadaka" literally means "naked." On the first day of home stay I planned to take a bath with him to start this *hadaka-no-tsukiai*. I called him a few times from the bathroom, but he seemed to be reluctant to bathe with someone else. I took drastic measures and went to him with naked and said, "Come on!" It work, he broke into a smile and followed me to bath. We scrubbed each other's back. This is a kind of our tradition, which shows a close relationship. Skin color is different, black and yellow, but we were scrubbing each other's back. I felt as if a young boy of a distant country now became my son, my youngest brother, and my friend. And he was bathing just next to me.

On the second day we enjoyed a potato harvest with bare feet. I told him how to store up potatoes and how to make an organic fertilizer. Martin said that he would bring the ideas back home and share it with his people. Our parting was just around the corner. Tear welled up in my eyes for the first time since my daughter's wedding. I didn't know why. I tried to purse myself that I could see him again as we promised. Martin, good-bye! Good luck, Martin!

A Friend from Chile

Hiromasa Ueda
Kanagawa Prefecture: Latin American Component (English), Teachers Group

A participant whom I received to my home is very sincere and pleasant person. He can speak beautiful English while his mother tongue is Spanish. We have discussed on various topics and shared information and ideas without any difficulty. He had very much interest in Zen Buddhism and Japanese history. I fully utilized my ability as a volunteer guide in Kamakura to explain him what he was interested in and took him to Enkaku-ji temple, where he enjoyed for observing Zazen meditation very much.

Since he took a great interest in Kumon method as a math teacher, I found some Kumon's workbook for him at a bookstore. He also showed an interest in our demonstration of *Origami*, a paper folding. I bought its handbook written in English as a gift to him.

It was wonderful that we could introduce Japanese traditional things to him as well as his group member at the welcome party. I found that people in Latin American countries enjoyed free and easy life compared with us.

Hasta la Vista, Ms. Martha

Hiromi Sasa

Aomori Prefecture: Latin American Component (Spanish), Social Welfare Group

Ms. Martha from Mexico visited our house. After dinner, she presented us a doll, called Mariachi. Looking at the doll, I wanted to know what kind of music they play.

The second day, she visited my school and taught us Spanish. We also played a game using Spanish. After the school visit, all my classmates presented letters to her. I was happy to see Ms. Martha enjoying the visit.

I did not know Spanish well but since Ms. Martha spoke to me very slowly, gradually I started understand.

When I meet her next time, I would like to speak lots to her in Spanish. Please come to visit us again, "Hasta la vista, (good-bye) Ms. Martha."

Lyazzat, Our Friend from Central Asia

Ritsuko Ishikawa

Hokkaido Prefecture: Central Asian Countries, Economy 2 Group

Central Asia? Kazakhstan? Russian language? Kazakh language? Quickly study to prepare for meeting Lyazzat. She is a charming lady with black hair and brown eyes same as ours. She speaks English as well. We gave her a try of Furisode Kimono, Japanese traditional costume for young ladies, since she is running a garments company and is interested in fashion. "Otin krashivo! (great!)" She looked beautiful in Furisode Kimono and even looked nicer than Japanese girls.

When she found her hometown in our atlas, she informed my daughter that the place was returned from Russia four years ago. And she added the name of the capital city, Astana in it. We are grateful for this programme which gave us opportunity to see a bit of Kazakhstan, which has a 10 years history since its independence.

Now the Winter Olympic games are open, whenever athletes from Kazakhstan on TV, we are so excited to see them.

A Challenge to be a Host Family

Michikazu Saito

Okinawa Prefecture: Caucasian Countries, Economy 2 Group

When we were suggested to be a host family, at the first we were passive. Contrary to our anxiety, we were encouraged by the participant. He spoke to us in very simple English since we don't speak English. "If I could stay here one week, you would start speak English" he told us. Also since he took good care of my children who even don't know a difference in language, he easily won the hearts of them. I become aware that I was too much worried about language barrier.

We discuss each country's culture. For example, we talked difference of how to declare love in each country, since the Valentine's Day was just at the corner. Or also we found out the "Hina-matsuri (the Girls' Festival)" in Japan is similar to "the Ladies Day" in Georgia.

Although the three days passed so hectic, we had very precious experience. We are happy to accept this offer. We also thank to staff members who took care of us and "Zaza" who stayed with us. Thank you very much.

5. Impressions by Local Youth Organizations' Staff

What We Wanted to Introduce to Participants through the Programme

Kazuo Otani
Yamanashi Prefectural Assembly for Youth Development:
Philippines, Small and Medium Industry Group

Yamanashi is nationally known as the local industries, such as jewelry making and gem polishing, wine, silk fabric and hanko (official seals used instead of a signature) manufacturing. However those enterprises are mainly small or medium size companies. Nevertheless, intensifying the struggle for existence among companies, they are establishing their peculiar positions. Continuous pursuit of originality and peculiarity led the companies to reach today's position.

Not "No. 1" but "Only 1," this is a quotation of one of the persons in charge of our observation programme. I would like the participants to follow this spirit. And when they return to their country, I hope they will utilize it for Philippines' development in their respective fields.

A Wind of International Exchange blows in Bizen City

Masayuki Takeichi
Okayama-ken Seinenkan:
Pacific Component, Economic Development Group

Days of the programme of accepting the Pacific Component Group have gone all too soon. There are two distinguishing characteristics of the Youth Invitation Programme organised by Okayama-ken Seinenkan. Firstly, we mostly arrange a Homestay Programmes in a place where people had no or rarely had such experience before. This time too, we arrange the programme in Bizen City where only two families among 22 had experience of being host families. Secondly, we aim to reinvigorate locale life utilizing opportunities to participate international programmes. In Bizen City, they had seldom opportunities to participate any such programmes. Through this Invitation Programme, people in Bizen became aware of the importance of international exchange. At the same time, the host families and people concerned to the programme reached to the better understanding on cultural and social differences. The staff of Bizen municipal office also had a good experience and opportunities to learn various issues though the invitation programme for the Pacific Component group. When the programme has ended, the host families reported that they realised that they had forgotten the importance of affectionate toward family members, through attending benevolent Pacific youth, who pay big respect to family members and senior persons. This Youth Invitation Programme works for better understanding of youth from other countries, as well as understanding of situation in other countries.

Exchange between Youth from Papua New Guinea and Pupils

Yoshiyuki Suezawa
Kagawa Prefectural International Exchange Association:
PNG, Education Group

We accepted 15 participants of the Education Group (vocational & technical education) from Papua New Guinea. We were strained at the first since this was the first time to accept participants from Papua New Guinea. Facing to their simple natures and cheerful smiles our tension was relieved gradually. At the same time, they became very popular to people from the schools visited or host families. Pupils hold participants' hands and never wanted to relieve them. Some pupils were enjoying hanging on strong arms or riding on shoulders of participants. Since the hotel they were staying is close to the school, we heard that some participants visited the school on their free day. The school reported their exchange programme on its 100th anniversary publication.

Wishing Development without Spoiling Ingenuousness

Takaaki Ota
NPO Gunma Federation of World Youth:
Myanmar, Education Group

NPO Gunma Federation of World Youth accepted 20 Myanmar Education Group from 20th of June to the 7th of July 2001. We were deeply impressed by their enthusiastic volition toward Myanmar's education and nation's development. Actually, we accepted Myanmar group some years ago, at that time too their enthusiasm moved us strongly. Now children in Japan are adversely affected by various social problems. And since there are many teachers teaching those ill effected children among the members of our organization, we particularly hope that Myanmar will lead a way of development without losing their pure minds. We could no do much for them but Myanmar participants showed their reluctance to leave Gunma at the farewell party. Such pure minds will surely work for their nation's development

Careless Mother and Capable Twenty-three Sons and Daughters

Yasuko Selke
Ehime Overseas Cooperative Association:
Indonesia, Agriculture Group

This was the first time for me to plan the Youth Invitation Programme for the Indonesian Group. My strong desire to have them learnt as much as possible resulted an overscheduled programme. When it started, I had to admit that our agenda was too hectic to follow in fierce heat of summer.

The participants received a heartfelt reception at everywhere they visited. Every institution prepared very well to receive the group and willingly answered questions the participants asked. The participants posed many questions, which always noticed me that we had not scheduled enough time. It was resulted in making us rush from one place to another by bus. The Indonesian participants hurried me along, saying, "*Oka-san, hayaku, hayaku!*" (Mother, hurry up!)

I hoped that they would appreciate the positive aspects of Japanese agriculture. At the same time, I wanted them to notice the importance of environmental preservation. As administrators, consideration toward farmers would be an important attribute. I guided the group in affluent nature of Ehime with my little desires.

Accepting Malaysian Participants

Yuko Yatsuzuka
Ehime Prefectural International Association:
Malaysia, Teachers Group

This time, since we accepted participants as an organization in charge of the local city consistent programme for our first time, we had a refreshing tension. We arranged our programme aiming at "let's make them observe and feel our real daily life."

Especially, there was an event introducing "Ukai, cormorant fishing." The participants enjoyed special fishing on boats with local citizens. Also the following day, they experienced canoeing with Japanese youth in the same river. Some capsized, and participants swam in the river though, they enjoyed the programme with big smiles. "We could not forget about the programme in this river," they told us.

On the other side, fully vitalised Malaysian songs and dance the participants introduced at schools created a furor. Now we hear voices; "we would like to dance that Malaysian dance again at our school assembly," "we want to introduce the songs and dance to other children, too."

It was rather long period though, it was a precious harvest for us. Each and every Malaysian participant's faces remain our minds so clearly. They are jolly and sentimental, and their hearts are full of love toward their country and families. We strongly hope to meet them again. Let's meet again!

International Exchange Attracts Participants

Ayako Tanaka
The Pacific Human Resources Center:
Viet Nam, Economy Group

This was the first time we planned and organized the 18-day specialized programme of the Youth Invitation for the fiscal year of 2001.

One of the most impressive events was the In-house Seminar, which was very new to us. As the organizers, we were very proud to be of some use to both Japanese and Vietnamese youths. The seminar helped the two different cultures understand each other and foster not one-day but long-lasting friendship among the participants. As a result, the participating Japanese youth created an e-mail link to preserve the memory of wonderful days they shared. The participating youth have already exchanged more than 50 e-mails. Some of them got information through the mails to participate in other In-house Seminars, and some served as volunteers for the Programme. Some of them have even traveled to Viet Nam to enjoy a reunion with their Vietnamese friends. Many Japanese participants have been attracted by international exchange. As the programme's organizers, we are very happy to know these things, and we will try hard to make a programme more attractive in next year.

Looking Back the Youth Invitation Programme

Takeyo Wada
ASUTE—KINROU CENTER IKOI-NO-IE FOUNDATION:
Thailand, Local Development Group

ASUTE, standing for KINROU CENTER IKOI-NO-IE FOUNDATION, has been involved in the Youth Invitation Programme for many years, by sending the staff to the In-house Seminar of Specialized Programme in Tokyo and by Toyoda Volunteers Association's participation as host families in Specialized Programme in Local Area. It is our first experience to accept the whole local programme. We are very glad to be engaged in the international work across the border. To make this programme successful, we had adjusted it many times together with the two organizations in charge of both Tokyo and Local Programme. It is a matter of course that we

sometimes had dissension with them, as each organization has its own contemplation. We made efforts for the better programmes in terms of their contents and programme allocation, expecting Thai participants' good satisfaction. And how the ideas of the people concerned are fully incorporated into this programme, was one of the attractive points and also the key to success of this programme. It is a surprise that I found the greatness of our own country as well as other countries by receiving the Thai participants. That is to say both Thai and Japanese can reconfirm each country's greatness by the programme. I cannot say when, but I am sure sometime in the future, the most fruitful results will be brought over the border by those who have been engaged in this programme. I am looking forward to it, and also I hope I will be able to remain in this distinguished programme. Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Thai participants, as well as the staff and everybody who have been in cooperative in this programme.

Difficulty of Being Host Organization

Shigeyuki Kato
The Ageo Global Association:
Laos, Finance Group

The incident was happened at lunchtime of the 8th day of the our programme. We arranged curry and rice for their lunch thinking that they would like it since Laos is an Asian country neighbouring to Thailand. But we were astonished to see their dishes. 90% of them only finish rice but curry was leftover. Afterward we found that they are not familiar to curry. It was a failure yielded by our easy surmise.

This dietary habits misunderstanding realised us how difficult to accept people who have different cultural background. And at the same time we learnt that we should have collected more and more information on Laos before accepting them.

It feels Africa got closer to me

Tsutomu Nagai
Federation of World Youth Akita:
African Component (French-speaking Countries), Female Teachers Group

We feel Africa is the farthest place from us. We were going to accept a guest from such far place, Africa as a place for them to have a home stay programme. In other words, people in Akita City have heart to heart exchange with youth from African countries on behalf of people in Japan.

We, the staff of Federation of World Youth Akita arranged the programme for the participants to have heart to heart exchange with host families and people in the visited places. We felt that we became a bridge between the participants and local people in Akita. Although their stay here was limited, we tried to offer many opportunities to the participants to feel Japanese as we really are.

Among our programme, visiting the facility for handicapped was the first trial for us. We wondered whether they could communicate with handicapped children or not. Contrary to our worry, the participants accepted and responded to smiles of the children.

They also enjoyed Akita folk dance and a chair game with us. I love mankind.

Young People from India Visit Obihiro

Kanako Ogasa
Tokachi International Association:
India, Agriculture Group

Our association received 13 youth of India Agriculture Group. I take off my hat to them for their enthusiastic attitude toward national building and their work ethic, which were shown during their stay. With agriculture as its main driving force, the Obihiro and Tokachi area has developed, while preserving its natural resources of fresh air and clean water. I believe that the program participants fully appreciated this.

Meanwhile, I hope that the interaction with Japanese people through Homestay Programme and the In-house Seminar will help to promote mutual understanding between us, and to achieve world peace.

India has more than five thousand years of history and a population of one billion. We are drawn to this country, where spiritual and secular aspects of society are beautifully harmonized. I hope that our program for the Indian youth in the Obihiro/Tokachi area will positively impact their efforts to develop agriculture in their home.

Teachers from Nepal

Kyoto Youth Hostel Association
Kyoto Youth Hostel Association:
Nepal, Education (School Health) Group

Most of the members of Nepal Education (School Health Education) Group were elementary and junior high school teachers. They showed deep interests in school cleaning by children, which they observed during their school visit in Japan. They expressed their intention that the practice would be able to adopt immediately in their schools. They were told that most effective method to prevent diseases is constant hand washing. However, it might be very difficult to practice it in their schools because many of them don't have a toilet facility, to say nothing of a tap. They are facing tough mission to educate people and conduct community hygiene under such a difficult circumstances.

Some of the participants live a far from the capital, two or three days away by bus and on foot, where they enjoy life close to nature. Their simple and unaffected manner must be attributed to this way of living. The host families and other participants were all fascinated by nature, which was a great help to foster friendly ties between the Japanese and young people from Nepal.

We hope the Youth Invitation Programme will be the beginning of long-lasting relationships, not only limited to information exchange but also culture and personal exchanges between our countries.

Things What I Learnt from Bangladesh Youth

Yoshiro Tsuzuki
Aichi International Association:
Bangladesh, Social Welfare Group

Our strong desire to have Bangladesh youth learn as much as possible resulted an overcrowded programme. Even we, the organizer, were almost overwhelmed with the schedule. My biggest concern was whether the youth were able to follow the hectic schedule.

Later I found my concern was needless. The young participants from Bangladesh tried very hard and successfully completed the whole programme. They were always cheerful and full of curiosity and humor. During institutional visit as well as lectures, they posed many questions, making it clear that we had scheduled too little time. They seemed to absorb new knowledge as much as possible, and to keep everyone whom they met in mind.

Their attitude inspired me, and I learnt a lot from them. I am very confident that they are the bright future of Bangladesh.

Thanks for Warm Friendship

Hiromi Osako
Kagoshima International Association:
African Component (English-speaking Countries), Natural Science Teachers Group

In Autumn 2001, we accepted 24 natural science teachers from 15 countries in Africa. We arranged their programme to offer opportunity to exchange with many people. For example, there was a programme of visiting elementary, jr. high and high schools where the participants participated classwork, an exchange meeting, experience of school lunch or trial of wearing Kimono as well as observation of the facilities. And they had a 3-night 4-day Homestay Programme in an agricultural district. They also had experience of Japanese traditional festival.

When they visited a high school, suddenly a participant stood on the platform and started introducing his country. Or others sat with students and studied sharing a textbook with a student next to him/her. Their active spirit occupied the whole school at once. Their faces looked most vivid when they stood on the platform as it is their own field. At the festival (a harvest festival) in a rural village, the village people and the participants made unforgettable memories eating African cuisine with their hands or enjoying rice-cake making all together. A senior lady hold a hand of a participant for a long time saying "welcome all the way to Japan."

"Wherever a person is from, even from Africa, America or Japan, however, all our hearts are the same." This remark of a host family remains in my mind.

Latin American Participants Visit My City

Masako Yamada
Kamakura UNESCO Association:
Latin American Component (English), Teachers Group

In receiving participants from Latin American countries, we, as an organizer, attempted to provide as many opportunities as possible for exchange with their Japanese counterparts. We planned municipal school visits so the participants could interact with teachers and children.

The programme enabled the participants observed a daily school life through visiting classrooms, having school lunch with children, and so on. Participants came from various countries. These visits also enabled hosting children to understand about many Latin American countries through participants' country introduction. Our Educational Ministry introduced "comprehensive study" as a subject recently, and an education of international understanding is to be promoted under the subject. In this sense, the group's visit to schools was helpful to children to understand foreign countries.

The homestay, a highlight of the Programme, was well prepared. In Kamakura many families already served as host families, and the participants were received very warmly. The host families expect to deepen friendly relationships kindled during home stay.

The farewell party arranged by young member of our association was very well organized and well received by cheerful young Latin participants. Every participant wore a *Kimono* lent by the association members with own way. The scene was so heartwarming that I heard myself saying, "Well, please take it as a souvenir."

Blowing with Latin Breeze

Akiko Sawada
Japan Overseas Cooperative Association:
Latin American Component (Spanish), Social Welfare Group

I was involved in the programme as programme coordinator, which enabled me to think over the way welfare work should be carried on in both Japan and Latin American countries.

I was terribly impressed their attitude of both the Japanese and Latin youths toward the In-house Seminar. The participating Japanese young people showed their interest in exchange with the Latin youth, while the latter had a strong desire to understand their counterparts. I witnessed friendly ties among the youths deepening, and I was very confident of our bright future. I know that grass-roots interaction promotes mutual understanding, which could serve as a pier of the friendship bridge between Japan and Latin American countries. An interest in people creates understanding, understanding brings people close to each other; going through this kind of process, the distance between us could narrow inch by inch. This is what I personally felt through the fruitful month-long programme.

Touching Principal's Remarks

Yukito Takayama
Japan Overseas Cooperative Association Aomori Branch:
Latin American Component (Spanish), Social Welfare Group

We focused on the handicapped child (person) to make a programme for the group although the background of members was diverse. The theme of our programme was "How those born handicapped can create independent lives by employing supportive systems and facilities."

When the group visited Aomori Prefectural Special School for the Handicapped, the principal said, "We have children in this school those who can't communicate with us orally. However, we have learnt one thing from them. It is that true communication does not mean to exchange words, but to exchange hearts. If we really had heart-to-heart communication, we could even realize world peace. Let's try hard to have heart-to-heart communication to promote world peace." The remarks touched the group members and no one had dry eyes. This was the most memorable scene we experienced during their stay in Aomori.

As a Programme to Think of Peace

Masakazu Sato
YMCA Hokkaido:
Central Asian Countries, Economy 1 Group

11th September's terrors and continuous attack to Afghanistan, under such satiation, not only the staff members but also host families were worried whether the participants could come or not.

When we met the participants at the opening ceremony, I stressed to the participants that we tried to make our programme to be a foundation of peace. Since peaceful society is necessary for this kind of programmes. And when our society has real mutual understanding, cordial relations and peace, our economy could be developed.

Fortunately this time, the programme was a comprehensive type organized by the local organization, so the duration of our programme has been prolonged and contents has enriched. So we hoped that both the participants and Japanese could think of the meaning of peace through participating the programme.

We wanted our programme to give the biggest opportunity to the participants to meet many Japanese, to observe Japanese as we really are and understand each other as just human beings. And we hoped that through our programme we could give concrete shape to our vague idea of peace.

Since the participants attended each programme enthusiastically, and the staff members of each visited place accepted us dedicatedly, we always exceeded the time limit. And ended each session exchanging e-mail addresses and promising long relations.

At the in-house seminar and home stay programme, the participants made good friends, not only just understood Japanese. Their Japanese families are now their second families. It can be said to Japanese side also. The Central Asian countries which were uncharted countries for them now become so close to them and important countries where their family member-like friends are living.

We were taught by this programme that we can pay our respect, love or prize the country where there is some one beloved or related, we would try to find co-existing method having close communication among each country and such human to human relation bring us to the pass of peace.

One of the most important aspect of this programme is to visit Hiroshima. When we were visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, faces of the participants became very serious.

Before visited there they already had information on the fact that Hiroshima was attacked with the atomic bomb but observing the museum, realizing that how tragic the incident was their faces turned to severe. They lost their words when they offered folded paper cranes to the children's peace monument realizing that there were so many child victims.

At the evaluation session, they reported that without visiting Hiroshima where people can learn how atrocious atomic bombs and wars are, people can not talk about Japan. At the same time they also added that they are deeply impressed by people in Hiroshima since from such tragedy people reconstructed the city full of vigor, green and warmhearted feelings.

They learnt that there should be principle toward peace whatever they would do. Especially they are going to work hard to construct their own countries, Hiroshima will be a model city for them.

As only one victim of the atomic bomb in the world, we Japanese should bear the task of introducing Hiroshima and propagate the preciousness of peace to as many as possible youth in and outside Japan.

From the next fiscal year, the observation tour to Hiroshima will be discontinued. As a staff of one of organizations operation this programme, I strongly feel that at any means we should continue to offer opportunity to participants to see Hiroshima.

I handed the participants picture post cards drawn by children wishing world peace. Since I really hope that they will show the cards to children in their countries telling how they felt in Hiroshima and also hope that they will tell the preciousness of peace to generation to generation in their countries.

We YMCA Hokkaido will accept participants from the same Central Asian Component Group. We are planning to succeed, deepen and develop our relations which we made with participants visited in Hokkaido to the next participants.

We also assist youth who are torchbearers of our future to aim at deeper friendship between Japan and the Central Asian countries.

This plan is also meet to our YMCA Hokkaido's Mission Statement declared in 1996; "We, as a member of Asian countries, wish world peace and try to realize global society where we share our happiness or sadness."

International Exchange Attracts Participants

Yukimasa Miyata
Conference of Kitami International Technical Cooperation:
Central Asian Countries, Economy 2 Group

Although Kitami is a small city on the northernmost island of Japan, it is Japan's top onion producer, and once was the world's number one mint producer. Close cooperation among industry, academic world and administration has promoted the industries in the region and reinvigorated local economy. Peoples' untiring efforts

in a northern small city have contributed to the Japanese economy. As an organizer of the programme, we wanted young people from the Central Asia Component group to be able to observe and understand these characteristics during their visit to our city.

The group was composed of 27 members from 5 countries. Their professions varied from administrator to businessman. Although we tried hard to make a programme to meet their needs as much as possible, we were afraid that it might not meet each individual's need because of the group's diversity.

I noticed that they enjoyed the farewell party with their host families, and recognized that they did receive our message. They had stayed at this small city in extremely cold region, and found patient people with warm hearts and their achievements.

My Impression through This Programme

Chikako Matsuda
Osaka Youth Hostel Association:
Caucasian Countries, Economy 1 Group

Through this programme I have an impression that the Caucasian participants could have nice interaction not only with the Japanese counterparts but among those from three countries. This programme must be very fruitful for the participating countries as well as Japan. It will be an important issue how these significant experiences should be linked to the future programme. We should level it up from "Three Fs—food, fashion and festival," which is commonly used in the field of international understanding education. It can be said that grass-roots international exchange will not need any special languages as medium, but I expect them to have one language in common among these three countries to enhance their friendship to the coming future. Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for my precious experiences through this programme.

