

We Are *Tomodachi*

Spring 2020

◀◀◀ FEATURE ▶▶▶

Women's Leadership Promises a Bright Future

Fostering female leadership and making a sustainable world



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JapanGov, the official portal of the Government of Japan, provides a wealth of information regarding various issues that Japan is tackling, and also directs you to the sites of relevant ministries and agencies.

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You'll also find the articles of all past issues of "We Are *Tomodachi*" (<https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi>).



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COVER

On February 18, 2020, Prime Minister ABE Shinzo offered strong encouragement to the representatives of the "Ship for World Youth Program" operated by the Japanese government. The Prime Minister expressed his hopes for these young people from around the world who have cultivated their international awareness and leadership through various activities on board and at the ports of call.



An Invitation from Flowers

The season that covers the islands of Japan with brilliant colors has arrived once again. Flowers sensitive to changes in the seasons have awoken all at once, signaling the advent of spring. It's time to visit multicolored Japan!

Hamura | TOKYO 東京





A collaboration of vivid pink hues

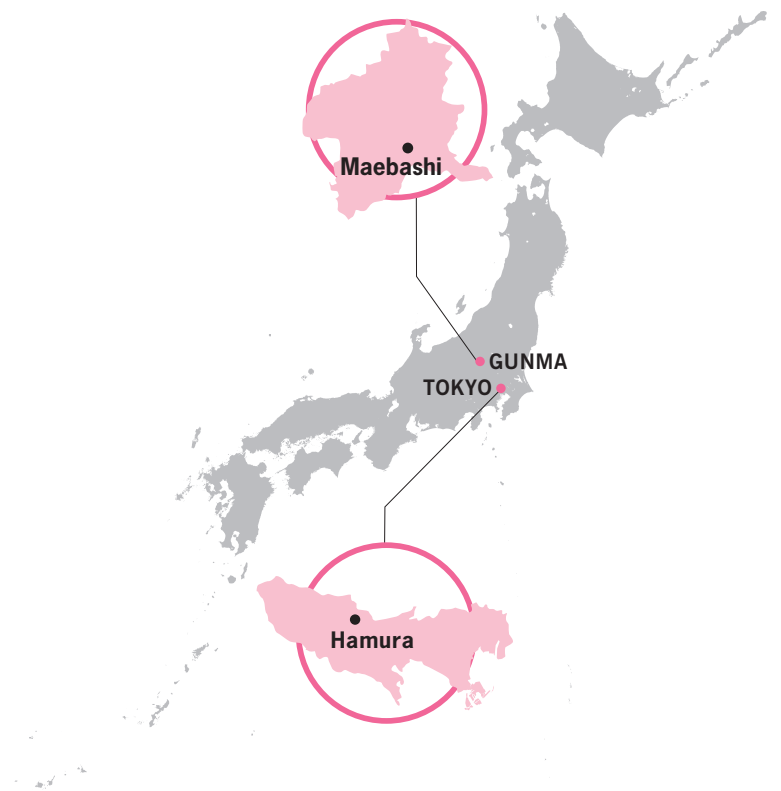
Maebashi in Gunma Prefecture is a core city with a population of over 300,000, just under two hours from Tokyo. At the foot of Mount Akagi, north of the city center, is one of the most famous *sakura* (cherry blossom) viewing spots in all of Japan. Over one thousand cherry trees line a road for 1.3km, inviting sightseers to enter a virtual cherry blossom tunnel when in full bloom. The moss phlox that covers the foreground is called “lawn *sakura*” in Japanese, due to the similarity of flower shapes. Come, enjoy the collaboration of two kinds of “cherry blossoms,” blushing in two shades of pink.

<https://www.akagi-trip.com/en/>

A carpet woven from rainbow tulips

The capital of Japan, Tokyo, is one of the world’s major cities. But with a little travel away from the skyscrapers of the central city, areas surrounded by nature can be reached. When spring comes to Hamura City, 400,000 tulips of 60 different varieties, bloom brilliantly on 60,000m² of rice paddy land. The various colors are arranged to form patterns that resemble textile designs. For a few short weeks every year, this quiet area becomes one of the must-see flower-viewing spots in Tokyo.

<http://hamuracity.jp/midokoro/english.html>



Women's Business Leadership Boosts Japanese Economy

Women on leadership career paths took part in a business management program led by some of the world's top professors. Their faces showed their complete readiness to lead Japan.



Prime Minister Abe offered strong encouragement to women on leadership career tracks with great potential.

Women on management career tracks at companies from various industries across Japan gathered with great enthusiasm in Tokyo in January 2020 for the Executive Program for Women Leaders.

During the closing party, Prime Minister ABE Shinzo gave the participants powerful words of encouragement, saying, “Every year, the number of women who study

management from world-leading professors has increased. That is excellent. I intend to exert every effort to create an environment and develop policy measures to allow women like you to unleash their full potential.”

Encouraging women to join the workforce has been a top issue in Japan. The government and the private sector have joined forces to help create an environment where



ONO Noriko of Max Co., Ltd.



The program is not simply about accumulating knowledge, but rather about engaging in hands-on thinking drills. The instructors said that these women will help boost the Japanese economy.



Top left: David A. Moss in Macroeconomics Environment.
Top right: TAKEUCHI Hirotaka in Competitive Strategy.
Left: Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr. in Leadership.



ABE Kazumi of All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd.

women can thrive, developing systems and making efforts to change attitudes. As a result, the number of working women in Japan has risen over a period of six years by more than 2.8 million compared to 2012. Meanwhile, according to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research, the workforce participation rate for Japanese women aged 15 to 64 has increased over that same period by about 8%, exceeding that

for countries such as the United States and France.

When one looks at the ratio of women active as executives, that figure is only 5.2%, indicating that there is much more room for improvement compared with Western countries.^[1] Therefore, the Japanese government has lent its support in holding the Executive Program for Women Leaders since 2017 in a continuous push to nurture women into leaders.

The program is run by notable instructors from the Harvard Business School (HBS): Professor David A. Moss, Professor Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr., and Professor TAKEUCHI Hirotaka. Rather than merely providing lectures, the program is organized in a case study format. Participants examine real-world cases from an executive's point of view, and engage in active discussion with each other to develop leadership qualities such as perceptiveness, strategic thinking,

and a comprehensive capacity for judgement.

ONO Noriko, at Max Co., Ltd., who joined the program, said, "In business, there's not only one answer." She added, "I learned the importance of eliciting diverse opinions to find the appropriate answer to each situation. Now I want to change the way I reach decisions."

Another attendee, ABE Kazumi, who works for All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd., said, "This program has helped me to improve my skills." She went on to say with enthusiasm, "More women are becoming leaders at my company. I think that this trend will spread throughout Japan. I want to tell the young women whom I work with about what I learned here." The great determination of these women seems likely to change their companies and, eventually, society. ✨

[1] From the Women Executives Information Website, sponsored by the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office

Spearheading Female Empowerment on the World Stage

As a former leader in the World Bank Group and active role model for female leaders, HONDA Keiko has extensive experience in private sector investment in developing countries. Honda advises younger women to determine the definition of their own success and challenge themselves positively.



HONDA Keiko

After working for consulting firms such as Bain & Company and McKinsey & Company, Honda acted as chief executive officer of the World Bank Group's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), from 2013 to 2019. Upon retiring from MIGA, Honda was invited to be adjunct professor at the School of International Public Affairs at Columbia University (<https://sipa.columbia.edu/>). She currently lives in New York.

In January of this year, HONDA Keiko was appointed adjunct professor at the School of International Public Affairs at Columbia University, the world's leading school in global policy. From March, Honda has been teaching a course on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing. With capacity for this course having been quickly reached, it just goes to show how highly regarded she is.

For six and a half years until the end of October 2019, Honda had been promoting investment in developing countries as executive vice president and CEO of the World Bank Group's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). MIGA is an organization that promotes investment in developing countries by providing private companies with political risk insurance to protect against political instability and

breach of contract. Flying around the world inspecting local sites, receiving the board's understanding, and proposing projects to investors, the job demands a wide range of essential skills, from diplomacy and political negotiation to risk assessment and management.

During Honda's time at MIGA, the agency more than doubled its guarantees of private investment. Honda's proudest achievement was being able to help supply power to approximately 50 million people worldwide. One of her most impressive projects has been a power plant in the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire. The power station actively supports women in the country who have begun to produce a cassava-based product using electricity. The women now earn enough money to



Top: Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos (2019). Bottom left: Taking part in the India Economic Summit organized by the World Economic Forum (2017). Bottom right: Visiting Pakistan. MIGA is supporting the country's development through actions such as investing in hydropower in an effort to resolve power shortages.



would then get direct feedback from the team and the client. We would adopt any good ideas and make sure everyone could share information.” This way of working would become useful at MIGA, too.

When Honda's daughter was a high school student, she said, “Mom, you should do something for society,” which got Honda thinking about giving it a try. This is one of the reasons behind Honda's transition to MIGA. Honda advised younger women, “It's important to determine the definition of your own success, and then to challenge yourself positively. Your own common sense is often not that of the world's. Listen a lot and broaden your horizons.”

Young women these days have more opportunities than Honda ever did. Honda believes that young, positive women should take advantage of these opportunities and contribute towards solving global issues. ✨

send their children to school. “If you invest in women, they invest in the education of their children. It's an investment for the next generation,” Honda says.

One of the things Honda has been working on is empowering women. She has worked hard to promote equal work opportunities for female employees, and in the process launched the MIGA Gender CEO Award. This award recognizes outstanding female senior managers (CEOs or equivalent) who have contributed to the World Bank Group's goals of poverty reduction and shared prosperity.

When Honda graduated from university, it was not as easy for women to find work as it is now. However, she was able to secure a job with a non-Japanese consulting company. After gaining an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, she got a job at

McKinsey & Company, where she hit a wall in terms of career progression. Although she found herself in a managerial position when still only in her twenties, Honda felt that things were going nowhere, no matter how hard she tried. But it was not long before she found her own way of working. “First, we would scrutinize the facts and then make a plan. We



Honda helped to successfully finance a power plant in the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire. Pictured here with local women who produce a cassava-based product.

Molecular Biologist's Findings Lead to Better Harvest

Japanese molecular biologist NOMOTO Mika has won a prestigious international female scientist award for her research, which is expected to alleviate the world's food shortage. With her persistently-inquiring mind, she aims to develop technologies that can contribute to society.

For the past 21 years, the French cosmetics group, L'Oréal, together with UNESCO, have been presenting annually the L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science Awards to female scientists who have made outstanding achievements

in the sciences. Assistant Professor NOMOTO Mika of Nagoya University was selected as a recipient of the 2019 International Rising Talents award, an accolade that supports promising young researchers.

Nomoto is working on research

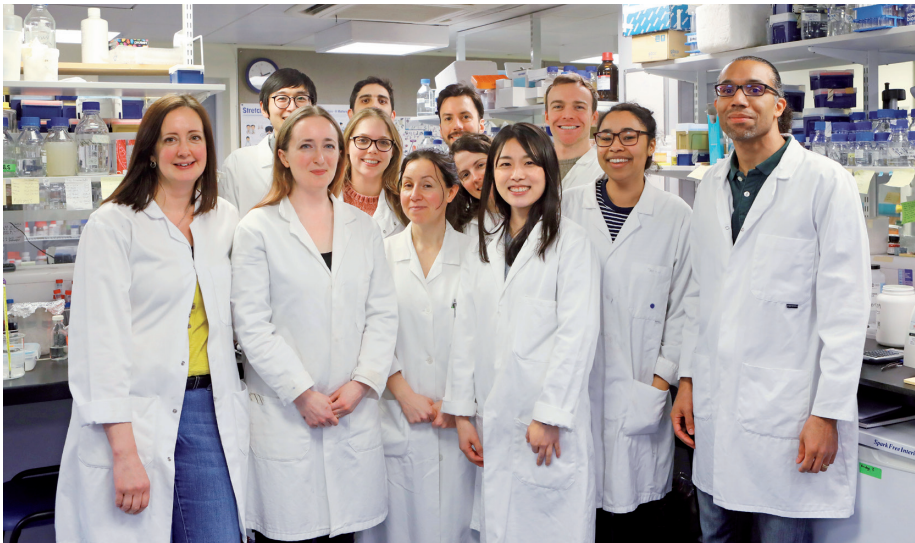
related to the creation of plants that are resistant to both pathogens and pests. While those plants have improved, there has been a dilemma involving increased immunity to bacteria that inadvertently makes them vulnerable to pests. Nomoto is



NOMOTO Mika

Nomoto is assistant professor at the Nagoya University. Her research fields are molecular biology and plant pathology.

Focusing on the immune systems of plants, Nomoto is conducting research that will solve future food problems.



With members of the University of Edinburgh's Spoel Lab. (Nomoto, fourth from right and Dr. Spoel, far right).

Nomoto is eager to decode the full story behind the plant immune system with its many unknowns.



the first person in the world to have analyzed this mechanism using an artificial protein-synthesis system. Her discovery will play a big role in overcoming the dilemma. Nomoto's work is expected to lead to the development of innovative chemicals that can help reduce crop damage. This in turn, should help alleviate the world's food shortages.

Nomoto grew up surrounded by plants in a rich, natural environment. "I'm always excited to get the results after experimenting with different hypotheses. Even if the results are different from the hypothesis, it's interesting to know if plants are designed for these actualities."

During her graduate school years, Nomoto had difficulty obtaining the proteins necessary for her research. Together with her academic advisor, Professor TADA Yasuomi, Nomoto established a technique to significantly reduce the time required for protein synthesis. It consequently gained prominence as a technique that could drastically help research facilities where proteins are handled, and as such, she founded a start-up company in 2016. Nomoto mentions that it is difficult to be engaged in two lines of work at the same time,

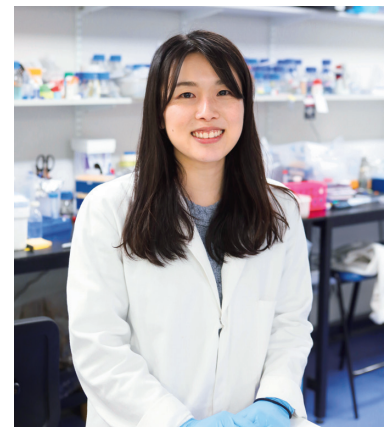
but feels a sense of satisfaction when users are happy that their research has gone smoothly.

These days, Nomoto is a temporary member of the Spoel Lab at the University of Edinburgh in an international program for young people at Nagoya University. The break-through in plant immune responses that led to the International Rising Talents award was also the result of research with Dr. Steven Spoel. There are many women involved with the Spoel Lab and Nomoto feels encouraged to see these women able to balance their careers with family or childcare. "Research is a great profession that can allow one to continue to grow, so I want people to know that there are plenty of women involved in this area. Diversity is also needed to generate the many ideas that lead to advances in science. Because of that, I'd like to see a higher number of female scientists."

Nomoto's words are filled with the elation of making new discoveries and the joy and appreciation of working with many people through research. She is now working on developing techniques that can have an immediate impact on the

world. Nomoto is also considering starting a new business based on those techniques.

Nomoto continues to believe in her own potential, courageously taking on the challenge. It seems that we are entering a time when many women, following in the footsteps of Nomoto, are choosing a career in science. ✨



Nomoto said that she has never felt any barriers in her career thanks to senior researchers paving the way. She hopes that more female researchers will emerge for the future of science.

Cutting-edge Technology Monitors Daily Health

A system that lets us “visualize” our health status, from urine alone, was developed by TSURUOKA Maria in her 20s. What has inspired this Japanese entrepreneur to make this contribution to the future of an ever-aging humanity?

Without even undergoing an examination in a clinic, but just by urinating in a toilet, it is possible to accurately check one's health condition—this dream system was developed by a female Japanese entrepreneur. Before, urine analysis required expensive equipment, but the new system is characterized by allowing individuals to casually acquire health data as part of their daily life.

The device, which is already available as a service, was developed by SYMAX, Inc., whose mission is

“improving the quality of life with advanced technology.” The CEO, TSURUOKA Maria, says that as a child, she witnessed her hard-working mother's battle against disease. She became aware of a dilemma: the harder a person works, the more he/she leaves their physical health to the back-burner. After graduating from university, her work experiences, such as supporting new ventures, led her to think in terms of “things that should exist for the benefit of society.” Against this background, the problem she

had identified as a child came to mind.

An encounter with biosensing technology inspired Tsuruoka to explore the possibilities. She began studying independently and making prototypes. In order to advance the project further, she started her own company at the age of 24. Through a process of trial and error, the company arrived at the concept of a device for casually analyzing urine in ordinary toilet. “Some people said, ‘Really? Can you actually make this happen?’ That's because



Existing toilets can use this new technology, simply by installing a sensor and router. Data is sent to a smartphone and displayed with icons, so health condition assessments can be understood at a glance.

TSURUOKA Maria

Born in 1989. After graduating from university, she was employed in venture capital, mainly supporting new business startups. In 2014, she founded SYMAX, Inc. to develop platforms for utilizing healthcare IoT devices.



we were trying to make something that does not yet exist in the world. But I never wavered in my belief that this is something that the world really needs. That motivation kept me going.”

The completely automatic urine monitoring system, created in this way, is a system that combines a sensor with sophisticated algorithms. The sensor analyzes the body’s condition with very high accuracy from the user’s urine excreted into the toilet. Then, algorithms, developed by the machine-learning capabilities of AI, are utilized to interpret the data into physical health information. The urine is instantly analyzed at the time of excretion, and the data is converted into terms that users can easily understand, such as “fatigue

recovery,” “concentration,” and “mental burden.” The status is then rapidly sent to the user’s smartphone. A daily health condition check is linked not only to the prevention of disease, but also to better health awareness.

Currently, SYMAX is promoting the system to businesses, and several major corporations have already installed the device in their employee restrooms. The company also hopes to introduce the product overseas. Not only in advanced nations with aging populations, but also in

emerging nations with a shortage of medical services, it is expected that the device will contribute to the maintenance of people’s health.

“We tend to rely on intuition for making decisions and habits that affect health maintenance. But if we have accurate information, then we can design a healthy lifestyle that fits our personal situation. If we can design our own health, we have more options in life. Ultimately, I believe that this has the deepest relation to our happiness.” With these thoughts in mind, Tsuruoka continues her efforts, through technology, to change the way we manage our health.

The ardor of this young businesswoman will doubtlessly help a wish shared by people everywhere come true: to live out their days physically healthy. ✨



Tsuruoka’s technology won the pitch competition at the Health 2.0 Asia-Japan 2015 Conference, an event that introduces the latest technologies in the medical and healthcare fields.

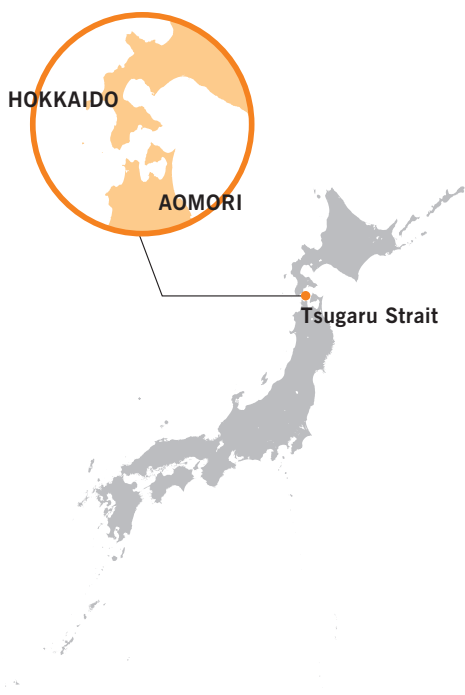


The Tuna Women's Club is a group of women who have diverse backgrounds and a passion for community revitalization.

FEATURE >>> Women's Leadership Promises a Bright Future

A Circle of Women Angling for Community Revitalization

The Tsugaru Strait is known as one of the best tuna fishing grounds in Japan. Here, a group of women are working hard to revitalize the towns where they were born and raised by various means at their disposal. They are the Tsugaru Strait Tuna Women's Club.



The Tsugaru Strait runs between Aomori and Hokkaido Prefectures in the northern part of the Japanese archipelago. It is known for its fishing grounds, and the town of Oma, Aomori Prefecture is home to one of the most preeminent brands of bluefin tuna. The Tsugaru Strait Tuna Women's Club, who named themselves after this local specialty, are engaged in activities to revitalize their

communities. These women with a vision, residing in Aomori and southern Hokkaido Prefectures, banded together in 2014. They have since added to their numbers and now have nearly 100 active members.

"Each of us women has our own personality, but we got together like a school of tuna to start up this group. Our membership comes from every local community near the Tsugaru Strait, and we publicize each one



SHIMA Yasuko (left) was born in the town of Oma, Aomori Prefecture. After graduating from university, she worked in Tokyo, but later returned to Oma, where she took over the family lumber mill. SUGIMOTO Natsuko is from Matsumae, Hokkaido. After working elsewhere, she returned to her hometown and took over the family business, a traditional Japanese hot-spring inn visited by guests coming from as far away as other countries.

of those place's appeal. In addition to creating more energy and wealth for our communities, our group's purpose is to pass on our wonderful hometowns to the next generation."

This is how founding members SHIMA Yasuko and SUGIMOTO Natsuko describe the group. Shima runs a lumbermill in Oma, while Sugimoto has been the proprietress of a traditional Japanese hot-spring inn for around 80 years in the town of Matsumae, Hokkaido. Both spent some time living away from their hometowns, but then came back to take over the family business. The reason for their focus on stimulating

their towns is a major issue affecting regional locales: "The Hokkaido Shinkansen (bullet train) opened in 2016, providing direct high-speed rail access between Tokyo and Hokkaido, but there are no flows of people connecting the Shinkansen to the towns where we live. The Tuna Women's Club is trying to encourage those flows."

The core of their work is a major project to hold 28 types of experience programs and events in 14 municipalities over a three-month timeframe. Examples of the activities include tastings of food favored by the feudal lords who once ruled these lands centuries ago, tours led by chief monks into temples normally closed to the public, and exercise sessions playing a traditional stringed instrument from the Tsugaru region. The original itineraries the women designed have earned rave reviews from both tourists and local residents alike.

The Tuna Women's Club essentially engages in volunteer work only. Because their organization does not seek to turn a profit, there are no conflicts of interest or status,

allowing members to concentrate simply on discussions about making their towns better. "However, it is important to take action after discussing. We are willing to work as leaders and will do our best in any difficulties," said Shima and Sugimoto, smiling.

The Tuna Women's Club has been an inspiration to others. Local high school students have started up town-revitalization projects, while university students have contacted the club about internship opportunities. This shows that their work is impacting the younger generation. Furthermore, the club's actions have been commended for increasing interaction of people traveling between Aomori and Hokkaido Prefectures. This attention has recently led to invitations to talk at speaking engagements across Japan. And just like the tuna in the Tsugaru Strait that have to constantly continue swimming, the Tuna Women's Club will keep up their work in a strong, energetic and brilliant fashion. ✨



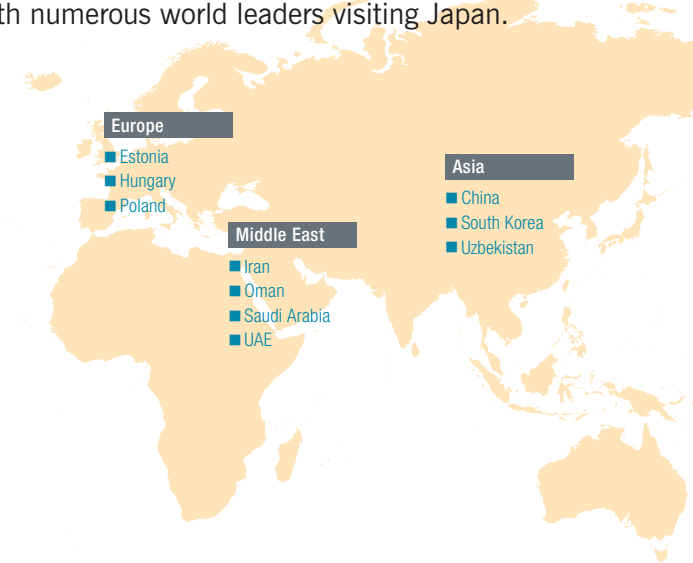
The Tuna Women's Club has designed *bento* box meals prepared with local specialties.




They also organized tours where participants wear kimono as they visit neighborhoods with historical buildings.

Prime Minister in Action

Prime Minister Abe continues to actively engage in “Diplomacy that Takes a Panoramic Perspective of the World Map.” In December 2019, he visited China and attended the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting. In January 2020, he visited Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman, and held summit meetings with the leaders of each country. In addition, he held talks with numerous world leaders visiting Japan.




 Met with H.E. Mr. Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia, at the Prime Minister's Office. (February 2020)



 Met with H.E. Mr. Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, at the Prime Minister's Office. (January 2020)




 Met with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, H.M. Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (January 2020)



 Met with H.E. Mr. Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary, at the Prime Minister's Office. (December 2019)




 Met with H.M. Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur Al Said, the Sultan of Oman, in the Sultanate of Oman. (January 2020)

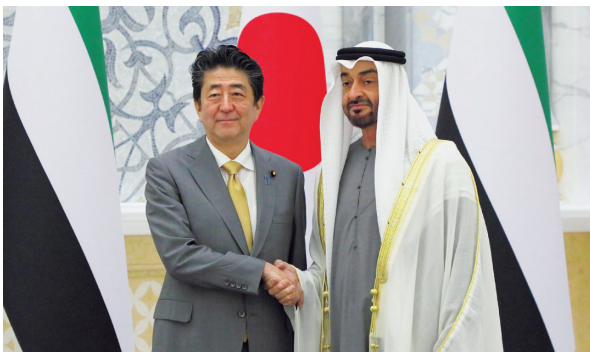


Latin America and the Caribbean

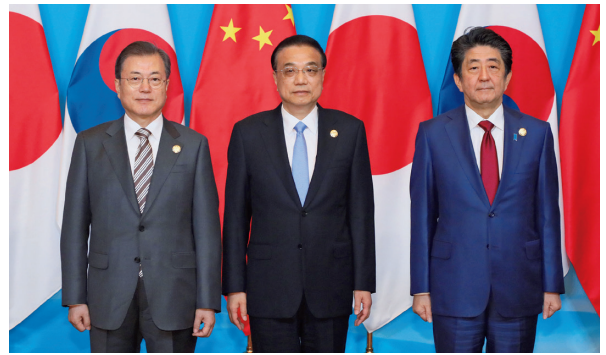
- El Salvador
- Jamaica



 Met with H.E. Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the Prime Minister's Office. (December 2019)



 Met with H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, in the United Arab Emirates. (January 2020)



Attended the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting and met with leaders of each country, in the People's Republic of China. (December 2019)



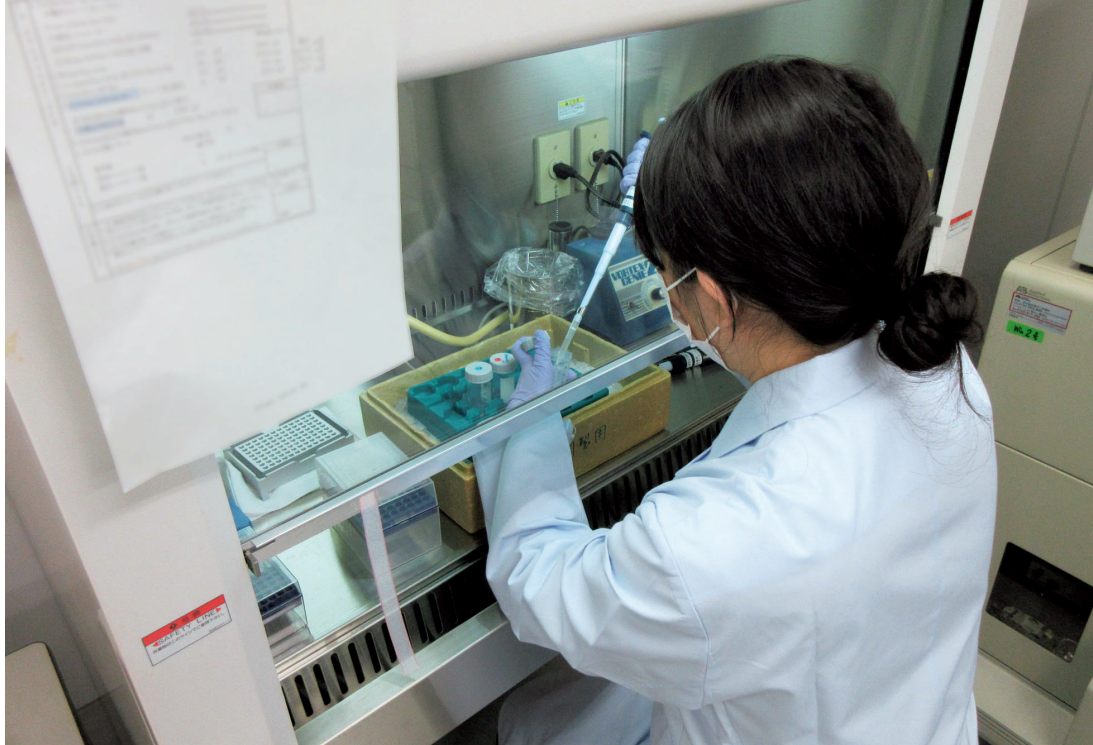
 Met with H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, at the Prime Minister's Office. (December 2019)



 Met with H.E. Mr. Nayib Armando Bukele Ortez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, at the Prime Minister's Office. (November 2019)



 Met with the Most Hon. Andrew Michael Holness, O.N., M.P., Prime Minister of Jamaica, at the Prime Minister's Office. (December 2019)



At the NIID, the struggle to overcome the global crisis is ongoing.

UPDATE >>>

Japan's Contribution: Breakthrough in Isolating the Novel Coronavirus

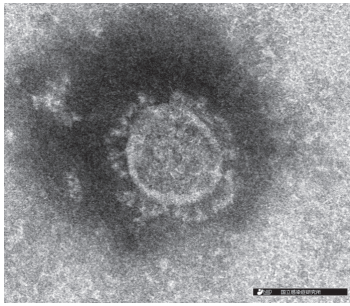
The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which originated in China, is spreading across the world. We spoke with Dr. WAKITA Takaji, the director-general of Japan's National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID), an authority of infectious diseases that was the first to successfully cultivate infectious virus particles for the hepatitis C virus (HCV).

SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus first seen in Wuhan, a city in China's Hubei Province, near the end of 2019, has quickly spread worldwide. On January 30, the World Health Organization (WHO), a United Nations agency concerned with healthcare, declared its sixth-ever Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

As NIID director-general WAKITA Takaji explains, "Coronaviruses are widespread in nature. So far six types that can infect humans have been verified, four of which cause the common cold, while the other two are known as SARS and MERS, which induce severe pneumonia. The newly discovered coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, is the seventh variety. Compared to SARS

and MERS, SARS-CoV-2 is less severe. However, experts have pointed out that while SARS and MERS generally can only be contracted from patients exhibiting symptoms, SARS-CoV-2 may be contracted from patients in the incubation phase, which means that they have not yet developed symptoms. This means that stopping the spread of the virus is a number one concern."

NIID director-general WAKITA Takaji talks about Japan's efforts to combat the novel coronavirus.



An electron microscope image of the novel coronavirus isolated at the NIID.

On January 31, the NIID succeeded in isolating the virus. The isolated virus was provided without compensation to the Global Health Security Agenda network, whose members include the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The NIID is also ready to distribute the isolated virus widely throughout the world. It is expected to facilitate the development of SARS-CoV-2 test reagents and vaccines. WHO Assistant director-general Dr. YAMAMOTO Naoko says, “The NIID succeeded in isolating the virus, and has provided the isolated virus upon request without charge to a wide range of research institutes across the globe. I expect that it will help promote research and development around the world, while also making a major

contribution toward better methods of diagnosis, the development of vaccines and treatments, and a full understanding of the virus.” Meanwhile, many researchers and medical professionals are working together at WHO to find a breakthrough in combating SARS-CoV-2. These include professionals from Japan, such as Dr. KASAI Takeshi, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, and Dr. KIDA Hiroshi, a professor at Hokkaido University and an expert on zoonosis, which is the transmission of communicable diseases from animals to humans.

Director-general Wakita goes on to point out, “In a case like this, prompt diagnosis and healthcare system readiness are extremely important.”

The NIID is partnering with Eiken Chemical Co., LTD., and Canon Medical Systems Corporation to develop an inspection system for testing COVID-19 patients by using loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP), a proprietary technique of Eiken Chemical that was employed during the 2003 SARS outbreak. LAMP differs from the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method: this method amplifies the nucleic acids needed for diagnosing an infectious disease in a short time and without the use of complex equipment. If they can develop a fast test kit with LAMP, it could enable prompt and inexpensive testing in Japan and the rest of the world.

In addition, Kyorin Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. is developing a method for performing tests in as little as 15 minutes or so. This method would utilize devices and technology invented by a venture that was spun out of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST). Another company, Hilltop, a regional enterprise based in Uji, Kyoto Prefecture is providing various forms of support to the effort to develop the technology. These efforts illustrate Japan's nationwide drive in which diverse organizations are working hard to find a breakthrough.*



WHO Assistant director-general Dr. YAMAMOTO Naoko expects that the NIID achievement in isolating the virus could help research into developing test reagents and vaccines all over the world.



The museum is now open even on weekends and holidays (closed on Mondays). Visitors are welcomed by Erica-chan, the mascot for the Northern Territories. Admission is free. Located at 3-8-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo.

The section for the Northern Territories utilizes projection mapping, helping spectators visualize the process of the Soviet Union invasion and occupation of the Northern Territories. There are also displays showing the life of Japanese islanders before the war.



UPDATE >>>

Deeper Understanding, Enhanced Experience

— The National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty —

A national museum for communicating the facts of and the Japan's position on territory and sovereignty has reopened in a more convenient location. The displays have been enhanced and projection mapping has been included to allow for easier comprehension, while visitors are able to interact with the exhibits through AR.

The National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty opened in 2018 as a communications resource for accurate comprehension of facts about Japanese territory and sovereignty, as well as the Japanese position on those areas. The museum has now moved and reopened in a more convenient location, just a one-minute walk from the Toranomon subway station, and close to the Imperial Palace and the National Diet Building. The museum is now also available and easily accessible for tourists and business people in

their spare time.

The spacious exhibition area of about 700m² includes three main sections for the Northern Territories, Takeshima, the Senkaku Islands and other areas. Noteworthy features include the objective evidence and the displays of the allegations made by other nations and Japan's refutation—a perfect place to review the facts and deepen your understanding. Through the use of projection mapping and AR (augmented reality), key aspects, such as historical and present

conditions on the islands, are portrayed vividly. The main contents in the Museum are available on the website. (https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo_eg/taiou/index.html)

The Northern Territories section has panels to introduce the history of territorial determination between Japan and Russia and the details of the negotiations between the two countries, including those held during the Soviet era. The projection mapping, which projects images onto a three-dimensional map, visualizes

the process of the 1945 Soviet Union invasion and occupation of the Northern Territories. At the same time, daily commodities used by residents of the Four Northern Islands during the prewar period are exhibited, showing how the actual life of the islanders was.

The Four Northern Islands have remained occupied by Russia up until the present day, without any legal ground. The Government of Japan intends to continue to persistently negotiate with Russia, in order to conclude a peace treaty through the resolution of the Northern Territories Issue.

In the Takeshima Section, evidential documents of Japan's territorial sovereignty over Takeshima prior to World War II are exhibited in a clear way, together with claims made by the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan's counter-arguments. In addition, there are written materials which show the recognition of the SF Peace Treaty that Takeshima is territory of Japan as well as the illegal occupation by

Tablet computers lent at the Museum gratuitously provide in English translation of main parts of the exhibition. Also on the tablets, Etupirka, a puffin that lives in the North Pacific Ocean, makes an appearance thanks to AR (augmented reality).



Display panels, a monitor showing video images, a diorama of the territory, and other exhibits comprise the Takeshima section. Evidence and documents substantiating the Japanese refutation are presented alongside the claims made by ROK.

the ROK side that is still proceeding.

Takeshima is indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based on international law, but the illegal occupation by ROK continues. Japan will continue to seek the settlement of the dispute over territorial sovereignty over Takeshima on the basis of international law in a calm and peaceful manner.

In the Senkaku Islands section, panels introduce facts about the history of the incorporation of the Senkaku Islands into Japanese territory prior to World War II, and

show that, after a postwar period of administration by the United States, administration rights to Okinawa including the Senkaku Islands returned to Japan. The fact that Chinese and Taiwanese claims are groundless is clarified.

There is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based upon international law. There exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands. Japan will act firmly and calmly to maintain its territorial integrity.

The last display space is titled "A parting thought," giving visitors an opportunity to pause and reflect on whether the claims of Japan or other nations are correct. This is a learning resource for gaining a better understanding of complex situations regarding territory and sovereignty and Japan's response respecting law and order in the international community. ✨



In the Senkaku section, the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands is introduced using animated computer graphics from the perspective of the short-tailed albatross, a bird that lives on Minamikojima Island and Kitakojima Island.

“Port of Humanity” Tackling Ocean Waste

— Visit Tsuruga and save its long-beloved sea and beaches —

The Tsuruga Bay in Fukui Prefecture faces the Sea of Japan to the north, with mountains in every other direction. Located deep in the bay, the Port of Tsuruga has thrived since long ago as a gateway to mainland Asia. It is also known as a “port of humanity” for accepting Polish orphans after the Russian Revolution and Jewish refugees during World War II. In addition, the bayside is home to the beachside pine groves at “Kehi no Matsubara,” whose majestic scenery has a longstanding reputation. The sandy shore here is a popular swimming spot in summer. Members of the local community have a special place in their hearts for the quaint beaches running along the bay.

In recent years, however, this

beautiful bay has been plagued by ocean garbage. Because of the way the deep bay brings in water from the Sea of Japan, it produces high waves in winter that carry an especially large amount of trash. The amount of trash washing up onto the bay’s east side, in particular, has grown at an alarming rate. Meanwhile, much of the dramatic increase in plastic waste over the past decade has been originating from other nearby countries. In the fiscal year ending in March 2020, over 350m³ of plastic trash will be processed in the city of Tsuruga.

At the G20 Summit in June 2019, countries agreed to swiftly take action both nationally and internationally, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, to prevent and

significantly reduce discharges of plastic litter and microplastics to the oceans. In addition, the “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision,” which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, was shared. There is a recognition now that the problem of ocean garbage is a global issue that transcends borders.

Despite the G20 agreement, Tsuruga’s residents are in dire straits. Along the bay, which once had a thriving salt production industry as part of its history, the people have a long-held custom of keeping the beaches clean, and for many years, local volunteers and fishermen have joined cleanup efforts. Due to the ceaseless stream of trash that the currents cast onto the shore in



“Kehi no Matsubara” is a scenic spot of Japan. The contrast between the vast sandy beach of about 400,000m² and the pine forest of 17,000 trees has long been loved by the people.



"Mizushima" is an uninhabited island located at the tip of Tsuruga Peninsula. This small island, about 500m in length, is a popular sightseeing spot with clear, blue, shallow waters and white sandy beaches.

For many years, local residents have been working to preserve their beaches.



winter, the major cleanups happen in early summer, when the beaches open to swimmers. Elementary school students also pitch in, but with the birthrate falling and the population aging, there is a limit to what the community can do. At present, Tsuruga municipal government has stepped in to help organize a framework for certain designated businesses to routinely clean up the beaches. Since 1992, the city has also participated in the

Clean Up Fukui Drive, a prefecture-wide environmental beautification project. These two efforts exemplify how the government and the business community are taking on the never-ending fight against ocean garbage together.

"We cannot stop the trash from coming ashore. Just like reducing CO₂ emissions, I believe that ocean garbage is a problem that countries and people around the world need to tackle together." So said a resident

who has dealt with the waste for many years in an area where an especially large amount of trash washes up. The community is doing what it can, holding summer festivals on the shore and other activities to offer the children, who are tomorrow's leaders, opportunities to interact with the sea. Their hope is that by having a closer connection to this beach, those children will develop a love for beautiful Tsuruga Bay and a desire to preserve it. ✨

A large quantity of plastic waste with labels in other languages washes ashore in Tsuruga Bay, where the environment is influenced by the Sea of Japan's currents.





TOKYO 2020 sports pictograms are being used for all kinds of guidance, and are included in the design of event tickets. Pictograms and multilingual writing can be found throughout the city, and the number of restaurants displaying food pictograms is increasing.



FOODPICT © INTERNASHOKUNAL & NDC Graphics

TOKYO 2020 >>> Japan's Preparations for the Olympic/Paralympic Games

Easy to Navigate: Accessible and Comfortable TOKYO 2020

Preparations are proceeding in Japan to offer athletes and spectators peace of mind during their visit to this year's games. Pictograms and multilingual displays will smoothly guide visitors across the whole of Japan, and a worry-free environment is being created for monetary transactions. Everyone is going to have a great time!

With the opening of TOKYO 2020 fast approaching, Japan is making preparations so that athletes and spectators visiting from around the world will enjoy a pleasant stay. The first time that the Summer Games were held in Tokyo was in 1964, an era when overseas visits to Japan were still rather rare. As a way of communicating without using words, pictograms were

introduced. Historically, it was the first use of sports pictograms at the Olympics. By accurately displaying various events, pictograms were an excellent tool for conveying essential information, and were continued to be used at subsequent Olympic and Paralympic Games. Inheriting the 1964 innovation, TOKYO 2020 will again use sports pictograms depicting the dynamic movements of

athletes. Both athletes and spectators should find it helpful.

Information pictograms also have an important role to play in a variety of places, showing the locations of public transit stations, restrooms and so on. The use of food pictograms—icons representing food items—at restaurants, such as those in airports, is also on the rise. This will assist people with dietary restrictions in



When you speak into the terminal, the spoken content is automatically converted into the language of the other party and is read aloud.

making appropriate menu selections.

In 2020, Tokyo will also advance substantially in terms of verbal and written communication. At train stations and inside train cars, it is now standard to offer guidance in four languages, including English. To make sure travelers arrive at their intended destinations, English-capable tourist information centers have been established at 132 major train stations and tourist spots around Tokyo. Taking a taxi directly to one's destination is also worry-free. The Tokyo Taxi Center is continuously training drivers to interact in English. More than 9,000 drivers have completed role-playing exercises in English, and over 500 qualify for advanced certification.

Multilingual automatic translation machines that use ICT (information and communication technology) are also being installed in shops and facilities. A handy translation machine equipped with an AI translation engine, developed by a public research institute in Japan,

has become popular throughout the country. With high translation accuracy, acquired by machine learning of Japanese syntax along with place names and other proper nouns, these machines enable smooth communication with guests from around the world.

In addition to language problems, making monetary transactions can be a source of worry to many people. However, even if you are unable to exchange your money at the airport, there are many locations where you can do so. At access points to airports and inland destinations, such as Tokyo, Shinjuku, and other major train stations, English-capable foreign exchange services are being installed right in the station.

For visitors who expect to use transit services frequently, widely used e-money IC cards (such as Suica or PASMO) are convenient—not only are they handy as fare cards for trains and buses in Tokyo and other major cities, but they also function as electronic money IC cards for making purchases. Recharging an IC card with Japanese yen can be done at ticket vending machines in train stations, and recently “Pocket Change” terminals have been placed in airports and



Staff can speak English at most foreign exchange counters in train stations. Large sums of money can be changed without worrying.



The taxi industry offers language courses for drivers for smoother communication in English. Drivers who complete the course receive a sticker to display on their taxis.

train stations, allowing the cards to be recharged directly with foreign currency.

Nationwide, stores and ATMs routinely accept international credit and debit cards; credit cards can also be used at about 90% of all restaurants, leisure facilities, and guest lodgings.^[1] Additionally, Japanese yen can be easily withdrawn, in 12 different languages, from over 25,000 Seven Bank ATMs installed at Seven-Eleven convenience stores and at facilities such as shopping malls, letting visitors make cash purchases at stores that do not accept cards.

Motivated by Tokyo 2020, Japan has raised service levels in exciting ways. To experience this user friendliness directly, please come and visit Japan yourself. ✨

A Pocket Change kiosk (left) and Seven Bank ATMs. Both can be accessed in several languages, and both can be used to recharge IC cards.



[1] Based on a survey of the restaurant industry, the leisure/hospitality industries, and other services that employ 30 or more people, with responses from 575 firms (Nomura Research Institute survey results).



Welcome Suica is a rechargeable IC card for foreigners. <https://www.jreast.co.jp/e/welcomesuica/welcomesuica.html>

Brilliant Proposals from Young Students at the G20 Ministerial Meetings

Faced with pressing global problems, young people leading the future have begun to take action. Their innovative ideas offer hope for a sustainable world.

Student Proposals | Hokkaido

Creating Experience-based Tourism for Enjoying Local Charm

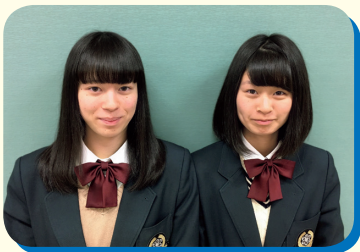
Kutchan in Hokkaido is one of Japan's leading resort destinations visited by many people from all over the world. At the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting, held in Kutchan in October 2019, eight high school students emphasized the importance of introducing "sustainable participative adventure tourism." The students proposed the "Be Local, Be Global Project" as a way for rural

areas to reap the economic benefits of tourism. AOKI Chinatsu from Hokkaido Kutchan High School explains, "We believe that through communication and direct contact between tourists and local residents, tourists will be able to fully enjoy the local areas (Be Local) and, not only tourists, but local residents can also learn about different cultures (Be Global)." Not only are appealing tourist plans needed to achieve sustainable tourism, but as ISHIZAKI Yuko from the same school added, "multilingual displays and menus for halal and vegan food are also essential."

One of the hands-on tourism programs proposed by the students is the unique idea of a disaster prevention camp, which views disaster prevention in Japan as a local resource. The goal of this program is to make learning survival

skills, like cooking with emergency provisions such as canned food, fun. "Last year's World Tsunami Awareness Day High School Students Summit was held in Hokkaido, with foreign students experiencing high-school agricultural classes. Through this exchange, we were encouraged to think about ways to make emergency food rations delicious" said MINATOYA Hazuki from the Hokkaido Kutchan Agricultural High School.

KIMURA Airi, also of the same school says, "it's important to find the appeal of local areas on your own." After graduating from school, Kimura said she will take a job at the airport, adding, "someday I'd like to help people know more about Kutchan through the work I do."



AOKI Chinatsu (left) and ISHIZAKI Yuko from Kutchan High School.



KIMURA Airi (left) and MINATOYA Hazuki from the Kutchan Agricultural High School.



"The first step to achieving sustainable tourism is to get residents themselves thinking about the attractions of the local area," said the high school students.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to ensure a society where all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The field of tourism is not exempt from the call to achieving these SDGs. Development of tourism drives economic growth, creates jobs and improves people's quality of life (Goal 8: decent work and

economic growth, Goal 9: industry, innovation, and infrastructure). How do we develop tourism in line with the SDGs? A group of high school students from the vibrant tourist region of Hokkaido has come up with ideas for a tourism plan that will help revitalize local areas.

Another key area for building a society where people can enjoy

prosperity is education. In order to achieve the SDGs' goal of "quality education (Goal 4)," the high school students from Aichi have put together a proposal to bridge the educational divide. So long as there are young people wise to the need for a sustainable society, it is possible to attain the future that the SDGs strive for. ✨

Student Proposals | Aichi

Bridging the Educational Divide Through Distance Learning and Experience Sharing

Resolving educational inequality is the topic chosen by high school students from Aichi Prefecture in response to the theme of "a world we want to achieve by 2030." 12 students from four schools announced this proposal at the G20 Aichi-Nagoya Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in November 2019. There are all sorts of inequalities in society, such as economic and work differences, but as someone who has spent a long time living abroad, KAWAKAMI Tohriki, from Meito Senior High School in Nagoya City, says, "having studied abroad myself, I felt that inequality in education is a fundamental issue."

NAKASHIMA Momoka from Chubu University Haruhigaoka High School says that during the course of her research, she "realized that it is the shortage of teachers that is the hurdle to bridging the educational divide." The



The high school students raised the subject of resolving educational inequality to expand the possibilities for children and adults around the world.

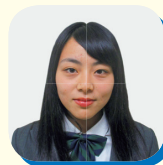
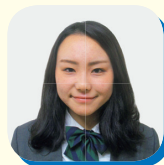
proposal points out that an estimated 18 million teachers worldwide are needed for all primary aged children to receive a school education. "We put forward the idea that all children from around the world would be able to receive an equal education by using distance learning over the internet," says MURAI Ken from the same school.

"We explained that feedback and information sharing is important between countries" in order to support more effective education, says MIYAO

Chino from Meito Senior High School. She goes on to say, "I learned plenty of things that I didn't know during the talks the 12 of us had. I want to learn more, and relate this learning experience to my own knowledge in the future." Some of the students who put forward the proposal are considering going to universities in Canada and Malaysia. Their goal is to gain a wider perspective and knowledge base, in order to engage in international exchange.



From left to right: MIYAO Chino, OHNO Mayuu, and KAWAKAMI Tohriki from Meito Senior High School.



From left to right: NAKASHIMA Momoka, KATAGIRI Eri, and MURAI Ken from Chubu University Haruhigaoka High School.



Women sewing at the MY DREAM Factory in Bognayili village. The women find various ways to recycle fabrics and save on sourcing materials.

GRASSROOTS AMBASSADOR >>> Japanese Individuals Contributing Worldwide

Sustainable Businesses Replacing Foreign Assistance

The village of Bognayili is just two hours by plane and car from Accra, the capital city of the Republic of Ghana. In this village of roughly 2,000 people, a Japanese woman has been supporting the activities of the villagers under the slogan, “Go beyond aid and be self-sustainable by 2022,” 10 years after the launch of the projects.

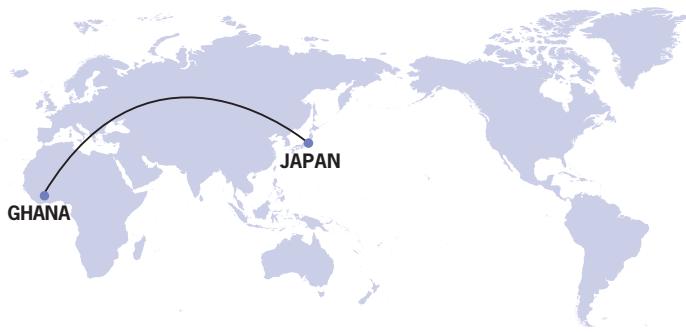
MY DREAM.org is a non-governmental organization (NGO) operated by members of the village of Bognayili in Ghana. The NGO’s aim is to increase proceeds earned through local businesses and improve the environment in which children grow up and pursue their dreams without relying on donations. HARA Yukari is a joint representative director of the NGO, sharing the responsibility with

village resident and leader Zakaria Sayibu.

Hara previously worked for Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during which time she undertook post-graduate studies in global health at a university in the United States. In 2012, while still a post-graduate student, Hara interned at an NGO in Bognayili. Despite her confidence that she “surely could contribute somehow,” it was rather she herself



Part of Proudly from Africa’s fine selection of fashion items and cosmetics.



who was helped by people in the village, as she could not speak their language, nor even make her own meals. Nevertheless, the villagers helped Hara by warmly welcoming her. Wishing to reciprocate their goodwill, Hara helped the village establish a kindergarten schoolhouse that had been long wished for. She created a website to explain the project and collect donations, and consequently the schoolhouse was built. It was from that endeavor that MY DREAM.org originated.

Since then, the villagers of Bognayili have undertaken more

projects to improve the village's health, sanitation and education environments. Hara, who was posted to the Japanese Embassy in Ghana following her studies, also applied her knowledge and experiences to assist those projects, visiting the village one weekend each month. For the first two years, the funding for these projects was entirely sourced from donations, but the villagers argued, "If we rely on donations, we can't continue the activities." Then, in 2014, the NGO commenced Income-Generation Activities, a project aimed at creating funding through local businesses. Hara proposed to add values to and selling the shea butter which had been traditionally produced in the village, and provided guidance to the village women on improving their sewing skills to create garments and bags from African Print. By selling products with true appeal and quality rather than charity items, the mindset of Bognayili villagers has gradually changed.

In 2015, Hara left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in 2018 founded SKYAH Co., Ltd., a company that operates the shopping site "Proudly from Africa." Exclusively showcasing the highest quality merchandise carefully selected by Hara and curators across Africa, the site provides the Bognayili women with the aim to someday have their own products of their original brands showcased at Proudly from Africa. "Recently, even the children in Bognayili are getting inspired by the women's enthusiasm and declaring



HARA Yukari

Founder & CEO of SKYAH Co., Ltd., and joint representative director of MY DREAM.org, a Ghanaian NGO. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009. In 2012, she started activities in Bognayili Village, Republic of Ghana, and founded MY DREAM.org. After leaving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015, she continued NGO activities while working in the Johannesburg Branch Office of Mitsui & Co., Ltd. She became an independent entrepreneur in 2018.

their own dream: 'I want to be a seamstress too!' One of the objectives of MY DREAM.org is to create an environment in which the village children can discover and live their dreams. It is therefore important that they find people around them whom they can admire as role models. You could say that Proudly from Africa is one of the exit strategies for MY DREAM," Hara explains.

If the local children are encouraged to study with dreams in their hearts, further sustainable businesses might sprout up in the village in the future. Hara says that the frequency of her visits to Bognayili is gradually decreasing, and her goal is for one day to be told by the residents of Bognayili, "We can now manage without you coming to the village." When that day arrives, we can certainly treat it as the achievement of one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ✨



The board members of MY DREAM.org. From left, Cecilia Dei-Anang, Zakaria Sayibu and HARA Yukari



MY DREAM School began holding lessons before it even had desks. Today the children learn at desks as they chase their dreams.

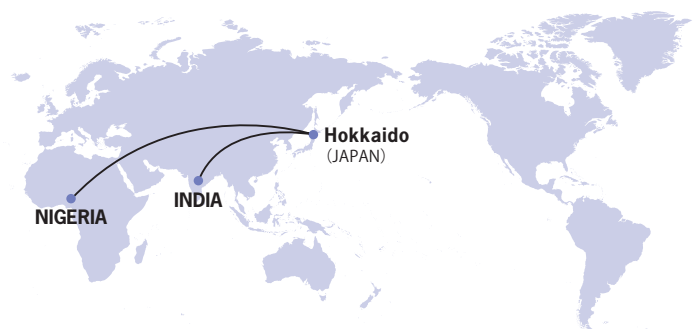


Tilapia that has been developed with aquaculture technology from Hokkaido University. The breeding period of the tilapia fish can be reduced by as much as 50%.

GRASSROOTS AMBASSADOR >>> Friends of Japan

International Students in Hokkaido Create a Sustainable Aquaculture Plan

A group of international students from different countries at Hokkaido University are working on a business plan to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their plan was highly evaluated in a global business contest, commanding considerable attention.



The Hult Prize, also named “the Nobel Prize for students,” is a global contest in which students pitch their business ideas to solve the world’s most pressing challenges. 45 teams, consisting of students from more than 200 cities around the world, participated in

the Tokyo Regional Summit in 2019. Securing a spot in the next stage from these qualifying rounds, a first for Japan, was the start-up company Aquamou of Hokkaido University.

The start-up, which is made up of a team of international students, was founded by the Nigerian Ifeanyi

Chukwu, a student at Hokkaido University’s Graduate School of Fisheries Sciences. During his aquaculture research on the Nile tilapia ‘super fish,’ so called because of its faster than normal growth rate, Chukwu decided to use aquaculture technology to take on the challenge

of youth unemployment in his home country. He heard about the Hult Prize, with its challenge for 2019 having been to “build the foundations of a venture that will provide meaningful work for 10,000 youth within the next decade,” and decided to apply. He believed that by investing the \$1,000,000 prize money, he would be able to create employment opportunities for up to 15,000 young people in Africa within 10 years, beginning with about 500 young Nigerians in the first year.

Aquamou’s plan is to develop the aquaculture business by rearing the fast-growing tilapia in portable tanks that use solar energy to manage water quality. Insect-larva-meal would be used instead of fishmeal as it induces higher growth rates and can be easily cultivated anywhere. This would enable tilapia breeding in places where fish prices are high, leading to a sustainable business model. “Fish is a luxury for people in Nigeria. Usually only people who live close to rivers and coastal lines can readily afford to eat it. Therefore, we are cultivating the ‘super tilapia’ by creating a network of young people who will engage in the farming of tilapia using our special tools, so that people in all areas of my home country can have access to nutritious fish, while also creating employment for young people.” says Chukwu.

Three others studying in various fields at the same university worked with Chukwu on the project. Kelvin Ikogba, also from Nigeria, a structural engineering student, was responsible for designing the water tanks. Ranjani Rajagopal from India, a student of science, is in charge of public relations, while NISHIKORI Hidenobu, a Japanese student at the Graduate School of Fisheries Sciences, manages the finances. After the four students advanced from the qualifying stage



Young people in Nigeria working on the Aquamou project. They are now mainly carrying out experiments on the water tanks.

in Tokyo, they learned how to run a social business during a five-week accelerator program in the UK. Rajagopal reflects, “Through this experience, I felt that you can create social change even if you’re in a different country, so long as you search for the right resources.”

In the future, Aquamou looks to raise funds and conduct market research to develop the aquaculture business. “In African countries, including Nigeria, Japanese brands like those of electrical products and cars have the added value of safety and security, and this project stemming from Hokkaido University in Japan is gaining attention,” remarked Ikogba. Looking ahead, Chukwu says, “A lot of friends and teachers in Japan have given me

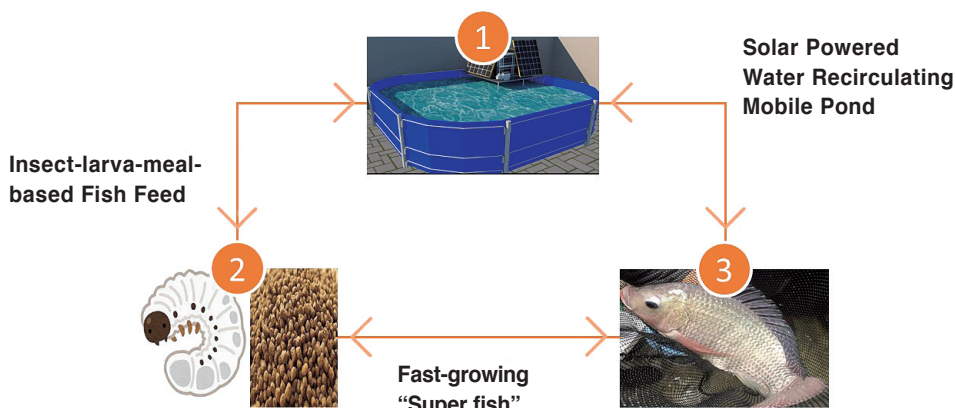
valuable insights regarding my ideas. I want to use what I’ve learned in Japan and make use of Japanese technology to achieve sustainable aquaculture in Africa.” ✿



Aquamou

Established in 2018, Aquamou is a start-up company of Hokkaido University students led by Ifeanyi Chukwu from Nigeria. The company has advanced an aquaculture business in Nigeria using fast-growing “super fish” aquaculture technology developed at Hokkaido University.

3+1 Technical Strengths



Aquamou’s strategy for the aquaculture business. As well as achieving a sustainable process by using solar energy and insect-larva-meal, the company is improving on their smartphone app, which provides aquaculture network consultation.

Four large, inhabited islands and around 180 smaller ones in the Sea of Japan form the Oki Islands of Shimane Prefecture. These islands, created by volcanic eruptions about six million years ago, represent a unique geological and ecological heritage, and were designated as a Global Geopark

in 2013. “The grandeur of nature is readily apparent at Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark, which is highly recommended even for beginners who know little about geology,” explain two Coordinators for International Relations, Jagoda Woloszyn, from Poland, and Katrina Killinger, from the United States.

Woloszyn, who studied Japanese and international relations at her university in Poland, was assigned to Oki Geopark in 2016. In addition to serving as a guide and interpreter, she is active as a facilitator of exchanges between Oki and other geoparks around the world. Similarly, Killinger became

fascinated with Japanese culture in high school, leading her to study the language in university. Followed by experience as an exchange student at Chukyo University in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, she was assigned to Oki in August 2019. She is excited about the idea of “learning about Japanese culture with deep roots in the past, such as *ushi-tsuki* (bull sumo) and other events and festivals that [she] had little opportunity to encounter in the urban areas of Nagoya.”

One thing that all visitors agree on is that Oki’s main attraction is its abundant natural beauty—the sea, the mountains, the vast expanses of green, and numerous traditional buildings that remain to the present day. “Whenever I climb a mountain in Oki, I can always view the sea. Such fantastic scenery would be



Woloszyn explains the topography of Oki to visitors from Hong Kong. In recent years, groups of middle school students from Hong Kong have made field trips to the islands.

GRASSROOTS AMBASSADOR >>> The JET Programme

International Exchange Promoting Natural Wonders of Oki

Jagoda Woloszyn and Katrina Killinger, two Coordinators for International Relations of Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark in Shimane Prefecture, work as a bridge between foreign visitors and local people



Jagoda Woloszyn (right)

Originally from Rudnik nad Sanem in Poland, she specialized in Japanese and international relations at Jagiellonian University, and also studied under the Kanazawa University program for Japanese Language and Culture in Japan. In 2016, she became a Coordinator for International Relations and was assigned to Shimane Prefecture, specifically to Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark.

Katrina Killinger

Originally from South Carolina in the United States, she started to learn Japanese from the age of 16. From her second year in college she began a full-time course of study, including one year as an exchange student at Chukyo University in Nagoya. In 2019 she became a Coordinator for International Relations assigned to Okinoshima-Town specifically to Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark.





The Kabura-sugi Japanese cedar is said to be 600 years old. About 1.5m above the roots, the emerging trunk splits into six trunks that grow straight upwards. "Depending on the angle of view, you see something completely different," explain the two coordinators.

unimaginable in Poland," says Woloszyn. Killinger comments that "The pure blue color of the Sea of Japan is utterly different from the Atlantic Ocean." She is also fond of Oki's cuisine. "Oki has an abundance

of seafood, all of which is delicious. The first time I tasted one of the local specialties, *sazae* (horned turban sea snail), the unique texture surprised me, but now I've grown to like it."

Drawn by the rich natural environment of the Oki Islands, tourists come from countries all over the world. "I hope that, by learning more about language and culture, I will be able to ease the anxieties of overseas visitors, at least to some degree," Killinger says. Woloszyn adds, "The islanders also have anxieties about hosting visitors. We work as coordinators so that both parties can interact comfortably." She continues, "When I see Oki-born high-schoolers working hard to communicate in English with students from Hong Kong on a field trip, it brings me tremendous joy.

I myself am not a native speaker of English; but being able to use English makes it possible to interact with people all over the world. As a Coordinator for International Relations, I want to assist the youngsters of Oki so that they can use English to communicate with people from around the world." *



Yui Maenosu Intertidal Shore Platform, on the western side of Dōgo Island, is formed of rock strata approximately 20 million years old.



Shirashima Coast is on the northernmost tip of the Oki islands. The coast offers a spectacular view of the Sea of Japan.

About the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme

The JET Programme began in 1987 with the goal of promoting grassroots international exchange between Japan and other nations, and is now one of the world's largest international exchange programs.

JET participants are placed in every region of Japan and work in one of three positions: assistant language teachers (ALTs), coordinators for international relations (CIRs), or sports exchange advisors (SEAs).

In 2019, the JET Programme welcomed 5,761 participants, and currently there are more than 70,000 alumni from 75 countries living in all parts of the world.



The JET Programme official website
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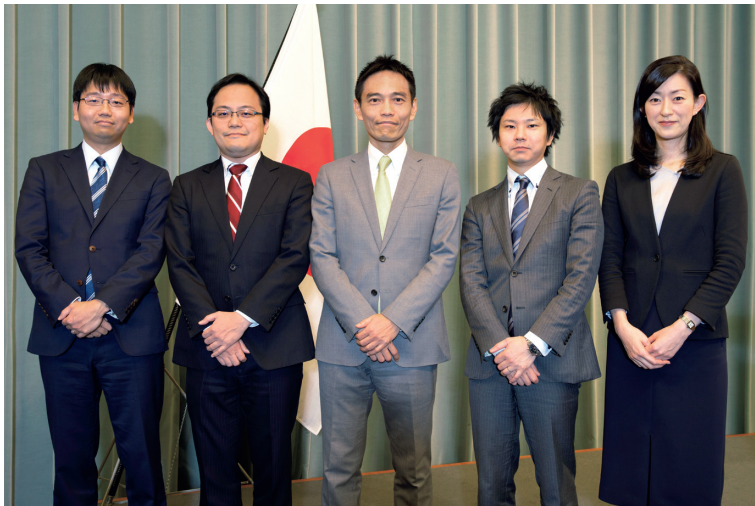
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