KIZUNA

Summer
2023

Linking Japan and the World

G7 Hiroshima Summit
Investing in Global Health Solutions

JAPANGOV
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

KANAZAWA SHOKO
Calligraphy Artist

Born in Tokyo in 1985, she started learning calligraphy from her mother when she was five years old. One of the notable young calligraphers of today, her solo exhibitions have been held throughout the world, in cities such as New York, Singapore, and Prague. She was selected as one of the official poster artists for Tokyo 2020.

Welcome to KIZUNA, the official magazine of the Government of Japan.

This bold work of calligraphy is 絆(*kizuna*) written in Japanese. *Kizuna* means the enduring bonds between people—close relationships forged through mutual trust and support.

Originally describing the rope used to tether domestic animals such as horses and dogs, the meaning of *kizuna* has evolved over the years. A passage in *The Tale of the Heike*, compiled in the 13th century, uses the term to refer to the bonds of love between a father and his children. More recently, *kizuna* has gone beyond bonds tying together family and close acquaintances; it is now used in a broader sense of human ties and connections. Of particular note is the *kizuna* born among people during natural calamities, which fosters feelings of solidarity and serves as the underlying strength to overcome hardships.

Similarly, the *kizuna* cultivated among the countries of the world has the power to deepen cooperation for a better future. By reporting on a wide variety of topics concerning Japan, we hope that this magazine will provide opportunities for Japan and the rest of the world to connect and build strong *kizuna*.

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COVER

Top: G7 Hiroshima Summit Session 1 (Working Lunch) on May 19.
Bottom left: A visit to Itsukushima Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, also on May 19.
Bottom right: Wreath-laying at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park by Prime Minister Kishida (right) and Ukrainian President Zelenskyy on May 21.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE G7 HIROSHIMA SUMMIT

The G7 Hiroshima Summit was convened from May 19 to 21. G7 leaders held candid and in-depth discussions on the various issues that the international community is facing. The leaders of eight invited countries and the heads of seven international organizations, as well as Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, also participated. Prime Minister Kishida reflected on the Summit, saying that it was a meeting of "historical significance."

In May 2023, the G7 Hiroshima Summit was convened for three days. The leaders of the G7, along with leaders of eight invited countries, namely Australia, Brazil, Comoros, the Cook Islands, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam, as well as the heads of seven international organizations, namely the United Nations, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO, attended online), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), attended the meetings. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy also participated. The "G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué" and five standalone statements were issued at the meetings.

Prime Minister Kishida and Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, who visited Japan to attend some of the sessions of the Summit, laid wreaths at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

Prime Minister Kishida made it clear that the overall theme of the Summit was to confirm the unity of the G7 and strengthen the roles of the G7 toward an international community characterized by cooperation, not division and confrontation, and to demonstrate active and concrete contributions toward this aim. For this purpose, the G7 leaders shared the importance of the two perspectives, namely, upholding the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and strengthening engagement with international partners beyond the G7.

Hiroshima was the first city in the world to be hit by an atomic bomb, and the leaders of the G7 and the invited countries, the heads of the international organizations, as well as President Zelenskyy, visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and laid flowers at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims in the Peace Memorial Park. The G7 leaders had detailed discussions on the realization of a "world without nuclear weapons" and issued the "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament"—the first stand-alone G7 leaders' document focusing on nuclear disarmament. The G7 will continue to strengthen its realistic and practical efforts towards

The G7 leaders participating in a family photo. From left: Charles Michel, President of the European Council, Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy, Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, Emmanuel Macron, President of France, KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, Joe Biden, President of the United States, Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.

realizing the vision.

As Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues, the G7 leaders reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to providing the necessary support for Ukraine for as long as it takes and concurred on concrete efforts for strengthening sanctions against Russia, releasing the "G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine." They also had a candid discussion with President Zelenskyy.

The G7 leaders held earnest discussions on regional situations, focusing on the Indo-Pacific. They reiterated the importance of realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and confirmed that they will continue to work closely together to address various issues related to China and those related to North Korea, including the nuclear and missile development and the abduction issue.

Also, for the first time, the G7 leaders addressed economic resilience and economic security as a stand-alone agenda item of a G7 Summit. The G7 leaders confirmed their united response to and follow up on a range of issues that need to be tackled in the long term and in close coordination. They sent comprehensive and concrete messages by issuing the "G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security." They also issued the "G7 Clean Energy Economy Action Plan," which covers the building of resilient supply chains of clean energy including critical minerals.

The leaders of the G7 and the invited countries and the heads of the international organizations had candid discussions on a broad range of global challenges including development, food, health, gender, the climate, energy and the environment. They shared the view that these issues need to be tackled in close cooperation with a wide range of international partners. The leaders of the G7 and the invited countries jointly issued the "Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security" and concurred on the need for cooperation.

Finally, the leaders of the G7, the invited countries and Ukraine had a candid discussion on the peace and stability of the world. They shared a recognition of the importance of the rule of law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The three-day meeting ended with "historical significance," showing the world that the G7, in close cooperation with international partners, will make continuous efforts for a peaceful and prosperous world. Japan will proceed to make full use of the fruitful discussions and the outcome of the Summit.

Above: The Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting was held in Hiroshima as the third in-person meeting reaffirming steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.
Right: The G7 leaders, along with the leaders of eight invited countries and the heads of seven international organizations, discussed such issues as food, health, development, and gender.

PROMOTING GLOBAL HEALTH

STARTING FROM NAGASAKI

Left: Professor KANEKO Satoshi (center) specializes in ecological epidemiology and serves as deputy dean of the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Nagasaki University, as well as head of its branch in Kenya and director of its Neglected Tropical Diseases Innovation Center.
Top right: Nagasaki University has a graduate school that provides high-level international education in partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with a focus on fostering human resources who can contribute to global health.
Bottom right: Professor MORITA Koichi, a virology specialist, serves as director of the DEJIMA Infectious Disease Research Alliance at Nagasaki University.

Nagasaki, the site of the G7 Health Ministers' Meeting, is home to a leading university in the field of infectious disease research. What does this university, with its extensive work on global health—especially tropical disease research—aim to achieve in the post-COVID-19 world?

Nagasaki, situated on the island of Kyushu in southwest Japan, will host the G7 Health Ministers' Meeting in May. Given COVID-19's devastating global impact and the reminder it has provided of the horrors that a pandemic can bring, the deliberations at the meeting will work toward strengthening global health architecture to ensure better health and living standards for all people.

As Japan's only link to the West from the 17th to mid-19th centuries, Nagasaki was once at the forefront of Japan's fight against the influx of infectious diseases from abroad and it was also where Western medicine was first introduced to the

country. A medical training school established there in 1857 formed the foundations of today's Nagasaki University. Building on more than 160 years of experience in fighting unknown infectious diseases, the university now leads Japan's research into such illnesses.

Professor KANEKO Satoshi, an expert on epidemiology, is deputy dean of the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Nagasaki University, Japan's only research center for such medicine. He said, "Often, developing countries lack properly organized data on their inhabitants and medical treatments. That makes it hard to see which infectious diseases are occurring where, and on what scale." The institute, in collaboration with NEC Corporation and the Kenya Medical Research Institute, has developed the world's first vaccination management system for newborns, equipping it with biometric authentication to reliably validate guardians' voices and newborns' fingerprints. A demonstration test has been underway at a Kenyan hospital since September 2022, with the aim of full-scale introduction into the country by the end of 2023.

A gatepost from Nagasaki Medical College, the predecessor of Nagasaki University, remains on campus as a reminder of the city's atomic bombing. Located within the site of an atomic bombing, the university is also committed to world peace.

A vaccination management system for newborns has been equipped with biometric authentication. The photo shows medical staff capturing the fingerprints of a newborn baby in Kenya.

Kaneko said, "If we can make the technology's use feasible and more widespread, not only will we be able to manage vaccinations, but we will also be able to obtain big data in the future linked to diverse information such as that related to diseases and the living environment. That could form the basis for various types of research and, I hope, lead to solutions in impoverished areas. We can also use the system—originally designed for developing countries with weak IT infrastructure—in developed countries as well, for instance in times of natural disaster."

Nagasaki University will also work to bolster its research capabilities to prepare for the next pandemic. In April 2022, the university established the DEJIMA Infectious Disease Research Alliance to consolidate the talent and research infrastructure scattered among various institutions on campus. In October of the same year, the Alliance also established the Vaccine Research and Development Center, which has been conducting integrated R&D activities ranging from basic vaccine research to the development of manufacturing processes. Additionally, the Alliance is gearing up to achieve the goals of the 100 Days Mission—unveiled at the 2021 G7 Summit—to develop vaccines within 100 days after the next pandemic is declared. As Professor MORITA Koichi, the Alliance's director, said, "What's most important is people." Beyond the conventional university system, the institute seeks to recruit talented people from outside the medical field and collaborate with private companies and other universities on R&D. "Today, environmental problems and other compounding factors are also causing infectious diseases to spread. I hope that new ideas will come about not just through the incorporation of classical research methods, but also through the suggestions coming from various other fields," Morita said.

Due to its location, which is particularly open to the world, Nagasaki University has long taken on the threats that infectious diseases pose to humanity. The university will continue to lead infectious disease research, examine the challenges behind such diseases, and work toward better global health using a comprehensive approach.

IMPACT INVESTING IN GLOBAL HEALTH:

JAPAN'S COMMITMENT AS A FRONTRUNNER

Global health's importance is garnering attention. To encourage capital inflows to this sector, the Japanese government is advocating the promotion of impact investing. We asked SHIBUSAWA Ken, who chaired the government's study group, about impact investing's potential.

The G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué from the Summit in May included the following sentence: "We emphasize the important role of the private sector towards sustainable financing in global health, including through impact investments and endorse the Triple I (Impact Investments Initiative) for Global Health." In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of global health, which aims to address public health in a way that transcends national borders and to have a tremendous impact on the world's economies and societies through international collaboration, is rapidly spreading. To support this, the G7 has declared to the world that it will promote impact investing in global health.

After working in the investment bank and hedge fund industries, he founded the advisory firm Shibusawa and Company as well as Commons Asset Management in 2008 in order to promote long-term investment as a form of asset-building for Japanese individuals. He also founded &Capital in 2023 for impact investments into Africa from Japan. He is a member of the Japanese government's Council of New Form of Capitalism Realization as well as the SDG Impact Steering Group in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He is also involved in promoting the ideas of his ancestor SHIBUSAWA Eiichi, the "father of Japanese capitalism."

Since the late 1990s, the Japanese government has been committed to human security and has supported initiatives related to the healthcare sector in order to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) around the world, particularly in the Global South.
IMAMURA KENSHIRO/JICA

SHIBUSAWA Ken, chair of the Japanese government's Study Group on Impact Investment for Global Health, said, "Japan has long emphasized global health in its overall diplomatic strategy. In addition to that, one of the core components of the Kishida administration's 'new form of capitalism' is 'investing in people,' and health is the bedrock of human capital."

The goal of impact investing is to not only generate a financial return, but also have a positive, measurable social impact. Of particular importance is the "intent" for impact, and to show intent, impact must be measurable.

Ahead of the G7 Hiroshima Summit, promoting impact investing in global health was also a topic of discussion at the G7 Health Ministers' Meeting. The meeting was held in Nagasaki, the site of the atomic bombing that followed that of Hiroshima. After the meeting, ministers from each country visited the Nagasaki Peace Park and offered flowers to the victims of the bombing. KYODO NEWS/GETTY IMAGES

Some believe that impact investment is "post ESG" in that it is more proactive compared to ESG investment ("E" for "environment", "S" for "society," and "G" for "governance"), where the investor is usually the one who demands disclosure on non-financial values. While "E" and "G" are easy to measure, "S" has been more difficult due to the different characteristics of regions and cultures, as well as the dearth of science-based metrics.

However, healthcare includes vital metrics that can be measurable and is science-based, hence the potential to be a universal "common language" for the category of "S." Some Japanese companies, like the major pharmaceutical company Eisai and the venture company SORA Technology, are taking the initiative to express their corporate value in relation to this category. For example, Eisai was the first company in the world to disclose the positive social impact of its product.

Shibusawa said, "Just as GX (Green Transformation) is not regarded as increased costs but an opportunity for innovation and the growth of new industries, global health is also not just about the cost—it is an initiative to stimulate a growth industry for private sector businesses, and impact investing is a new concept being developed for the valuation of that industry."

Japan is a country that has long promoted global health for the developing countries of the Global South, and as such is in a good position to lead initiatives involving impact investing that promote a new flow of private sector capital for this very important global issue of "leaving no one behind."

Dengue fever, rabies, and other neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) impede economic growth and human development in impoverished areas. The photo shows a patient being treated for mycetoma. The GHIT Fund has invested in a project undertaken by Eisai Co., Ltd. to develop therapeutic drugs for the disease.
LAMECK ODODO-DNDI

PUBLIC-PRIVATE FUND BOLSTERS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

IN FIGHTING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Neglected infectious diseases threaten the lives and health of multitudes in the world's low- and middle-income countries. The Global Health Innovative Technology Fund, based in Japan, promotes global partnerships between public and private actors in developing drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics, thus contributing to healthcare systems that leave no one behind.

Infectious diseases such as neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), tuberculosis, and malaria greatly affect and threaten the health and lives of more than a billion people in the low- and middle-income countries of the world. However, research and development into drugs, tests and vaccines that target those infectious diseases have not been tackled well in high-income countries, where they are less prevalent, as the return on investment has been deemed to be low. Instead, medical research in these countries has tended to focus on other diseases such as cancer.

The Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund was established in 2013 as a unique global public-private fund with the goal of making the world a place where adequate medical treatment is available to all,

KUNII Osamu, MD, MPH, PhD, CEO of the GHIT Fund, has worked for UNICEF and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and has strived for improved global health in such fields as infectious disease control, maternal and child health, and humanitarian relief. He is committed to improving access to medical technology and services for the countless number of people underserved or left behind in over 130 countries. He regards the GHIT Fund as a way to provide support by positioning domestic and overseas partners in a win-win relationship.

promoting the development of drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics to treat and prevent infectious diseases. Its funding partners include the Government of Japan; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Wellcome, a global charitable foundation; and various Japanese and global pharmaceutical companies. Up to now, a total of 170 product development partners have participated in a system of open innovation that generates new countermeasures by linking Japan's leading technologies with overseas resources and networks.

"The GHIT Fund emphasizes partnerships," says KUNII Osamu, CEO of the fund. "Drug development is extremely costly and requires years to complete. The success rate is low for single businesses and universities. It is important to accelerate the process and improve the success rate by strengthening cooperation."

In the decade since its inception, the GHIT Fund has invested 29.1 billion yen in a total of 118 projects. Clinical trials are underway for 12 of them. One involves the development of a drug to treat mycetoma, an infection frequently caused by bacteria or fungi picked up while walking barefoot. Eisai Co., Ltd., Japan had already developed a drug for onychomycosis, which is expected to be also effective against mycetoma. A partnership with the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), an international NPO, was thus initiated and became the basis for an ongoing effort to develop a drug that is safer and more effective than existing ones.

The first GHIT-funded drug project to apply for approval in clinical use involves a pediatric drug for schistosomiasis (bilharzia), an infection caused by exposure to contaminated water, and which can damage internal organs. An application for the drug was submitted to the European Medicines Agency in December 2022. Merck KGaA, a pharmaceutical company based in Germany, had already provided the world with an effective therapeutic drug, but a pediatric version of the drug was yet to exist. Oral tablets for adults were not only too large—they were also bitter and difficult to administer to infants and young children. Astellas Pharma Inc. of Japan, on the other hand, possessed the necessary technology to manufacture small pills without the bitter taste, which makes them easier for preschool-aged children to swallow, and collaborated with Merck to develop a pediatric drug for schistosomiasis. If approved, the drug may bring relief to more than 50 million children suffering from the disease.

"Japan prioritized measures against infectious diseases as one of the important agenda items at the G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in 2000. Since then, the country has continued to emphasize the importance of global health," Kunii explains. At the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016, the promotion of universal health coverage—the idea that everyone, everywhere, should be able to access quality health services—was presented for the first time as a major agenda item. "Japan has continued to assert that an emphasis on health would increase the resilience of communities and reduce poverty," says Kunii. At a press conference following the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May of this year, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio mentioned that Japan planned to make contributions totaling approximately 7.5 billion U.S. dollars from the public and private sectors toward the enhancement of global health, including a 200 million U.S. dollar pledge to the GHIT Fund by the government.

In addition to AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, NTDs are rampant in developing countries. The GHIT Fund was established as a means of linking Japanese technology and innovations with the development of new tools to combat those diseases.

Going forward, the GHIT Fund will further accelerate the development of various drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics, with additional plans in place to fortify efforts and partnerships to deliver the products resulting from that work to the people in need by ensuring equitable and timely access. Kunii concludes, "The GHIT Fund will be the leverage and catalyst to make our world better. We want to be a driving force for a greater future."

STEADY PROGRESS TOWARD

ELIMINATING GLOBAL HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES

Making healthcare services more widely available is essential for people around the world to lead healthier lives. One of the missions of Japan's National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM) is to engage in international healthcare collaboration. How is it tackling this challenge?

Many people in the world still lack access to adequate healthcare services. Given this situation, the Japanese government has been promoting global health as a priority area for international cooperation, with the National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM) at the core of this initiative. The NCGM conducts research and develops technology for infectious diseases and other illnesses, while also being involved in international healthcare collaboration through research and training for technical specialists.

Dr. OBARA Hiromi, an obstetrician-gynecologist at the NCGM's Bureau of International Health Cooperation, is originally from Aomori Prefecture in northern Japan. Born and raised in a sparsely populated region with no large hospitals nearby, she recognized the disparity in medical care between urban and rural areas. When Obara joined an NGO with activities based in Cambodia during her fourth year of medical school, she learned that global disparities in healthcare are beyond comparison in terms of their severity, which eventually led to her decision to pursue a career in international health. At the time, the concept of sexual and reproductive health and rights was just beginning to

At a conference held in Tokyo by the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office under the co-sponsorship of the NCGM, the administrative officer of the Lao Ministry of Health presented a "Plan to Improve the Quantity and Quality of Newborn Care." Dr. OBARA Hiromi is on the far right of the photo.

attract the international medical community's attention. With the prospect of being involved in issues related to women's lifelong health, such as childbirth, Obara decided to major in obstetrics and gynecology.

From 2001 to 2003, she was involved in a project in Cambodia for maternal and child health run by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a long-term expert in obstetrics and gynecology. She assisted doctors and midwives working in rural areas of Cambodia, which had lost many such healthcare workers during its civil war. With Japanese grant aid, JICA established the National Maternal and Child Health Center (NMCHC) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. During the course of the project, the medical staff at the NMCHC led training for workers in the same professions in rural areas. Obara and her JICA team helped design the training and midwifery support programs, which are tailored to the level of medical care and locally available resources in each area.

In 2005, she joined the International Medical Center of Japan, the NCGM's predecessor, because she wanted to be fully involved in international healthcare cooperation. She spent 12 years in three countries, collaborating with medical professionals and health administrators in each country to improve maternal and child healthcare systems.

Leveraging her experience in several low- and middle-income countries, Obara has served on many committees to formulate the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) on maternal and child healthcare. She believes her role is to be the voice for those working in medical settings in such countries. She said, "To ensure that guidelines will be implemented properly in each country, I try to provide technical information that will make these guidelines easy to understand and implement as well."

The goal of the NCGM's Bureau of International Health Cooperation is to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), which means all people having access to appropriate and affordable services that promote health and provide preventive care, medical treatment, and rehabilitation. Obara said, "There are people in the world who can't receive healthcare because they can't afford the medical bills or the cost of transportation to hospital, while others hesitate to seek care because they are unaware that they have access to their country's health insurance system. In Laos, we made sure that the Maternal and Child Health Handbook indicates that giving birth is free." She feels that in order to achieve UHC, steady action is required to ensure that the fundamentals of basic healthcare services are provided and are accessible to more people.

"We're not doing anything extraordinary. I hold profound respect for the local people and their enthusiasm," Obara said modestly. However, the work she and her colleagues have put in to build trust with communities is the cornerstone of the wider effort to bring healthcare services to people around the world. ●

Left: Obara (right) with a WHO official at a meeting to modify and finalize the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Laos.
Right: The Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Laos that Obara and others were involved in producing. The handbook includes such messages as the statement that giving birth is free, informing people of the availability of various systems related to maternal and child healthcare.

In 2019, Sakra World Hospital began offering a home-care service to support discharged patients. Staff members make visits to patients' homes to perform nursing care, take blood samples, and offer rehabilitation. In those activities, they make use of know-how developed in Japan to cope with the country's aging population.

DELIVERING SAFE, QUALITY MEDICAL CARE

FOR COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT IN INDIA

In the city of Bengaluru in southern India, a Japanese-style general hospital is leveraging its know-how to conquer India's medical-care challenges, demonstrating positive results. What approaches should be taken within flexible and advanced medical care to meet the needs and match the realities of a rapidly growing emerging country?

Bengaluru in southern India is a city that encapsulates the dynamically growing India of today. While it is a modern city with an intense concentration of IT and biotech industries—not to mention its population of over 10 million—it also faces multiple challenges, such as poverty and slow progress in the development of its social infrastructure. With a growing economy and the largest population in the world, the demand for quality in the field of medical care across the country as a whole is also rising, but access to such services is meager, with shortages of both doctors and hospital beds. There are also serious inequalities in the country's medical care due partly to the underdeveloped health insurance system.

Recent years have seen Japanese companies initiating activities in India to address such issues. A leading pioneer in the field is Bengaluru's Sakra World Hospital, the first general hospital in India to be run by Japanese management. It has more than 220 physicians providing advanced acute care in over 35 specialist fields, including those related to neurological disorders and cardiovascular and digestive diseases. It is operated by Secom Medical System Co., Ltd., which, among other activities, engages

Left: Sakra is partnered with Japanese hospitals that provide advanced medical care, and actively engages in staff exchanges with them. According to Ishida, Japanese doctors also have much to learn from Sakra, thanks to its many doctors with experience in Western countries, as well as its abundance and variety of case studies.
Right: Making use of Japan's nursing-education know-how, the hospital imparts not just nursing techniques but also such other skills as those related to hospitality. Sakra has created a career path that promotes excellent nurses to more important positions, which has improved their motivation and awareness.

in hospital management support and offers home nursing services in Japan, and Toyota Tsusho Corporation, the trading arm of the Toyota Group.

The hospital now has some 1,400 new inpatients per month, but when it was founded in 2014, it initially faced a mountain of challenges—from the establishment of an adequate management system to the development of human resources. ISHIDA Shiori of the hospital management division of Secom Medical System said, "While learning from scratch about medical care in India, we have strived to create a system that provides safe medicine." By practicing *kaizen* (the business philosophy of constantly reviewing operations to improve work efficiency and safety) in all its departments, the hospital upgraded the effectiveness of many of its operations—including responses to nurse calls and waiting times in the hospital pharmacy—and significantly enhanced the awareness of the staff.

Top: Equipped with an emergency outpatient ward and rehabilitation center, Sakra is located in the Bellandur district of southeastern Bengaluru, where IT companies are concentrated. In 2025 or 2026, a second hospital is set to be established in a different district of the city, offering advanced forms of care such as cancer treatment and comprehensive health checkup services, among others.
Bottom: "Over the course of many years, Sakra has cultivated an approach that emphasizes the equality of life. Thanks to that, some people, confident in getting treated, traveled long distances to the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to continue to cherish that culture," said ISHIDA Shiori of the hospital management division of Secom Medical System.

Focus is also placed on interaction with Japanese medical institutions. Not only do doctors actively conduct mutual visits and joint case reviews, but selected members of the nursing team also visit Japanese hospitals to learn about nursing operations. "This training has had a significant impact. The key to attracting and developing excellent human resources is the provision of learning opportunities that money cannot buy," said Ishida.

While enhancing the quality of medical care, the hospital also aims to provide care to a broader swath of the population. Nearly 50 of the 307 hospital beds are the simple economy type, enhancing accessibility for lower-income patients. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 5,900 patients, regardless of financial status, were treated. "At first, there were some who were strongly opposed to such an indiscriminate approach to treatment. But the hospital's emphasis on the equality of all human lives helped it to gain the trust of the local people," said Ishida. The number of patients choosing the hospital has continued to increase, even since the pandemic's containment.

Now, one future goal of the hospital is to build a system providing seamless care—from convalescent care following hospital discharge to home medical-care support—by establishing clinics and providing home-care services in the surrounding communities. Ishida explained that "primary care and postoperative follow-ups will be conducted at clinics or at home, and patients who need detailed examinations or surgery will be sent to Sakra. In Japan, this is known as a 'community-based integrated care system,' but the concept itself has yet to be introduced to India on a national scale." Since 2019, Sakra has been operating its first clinic and offering home-care services. Utilizing the experiences at Sakra to build a system that meets the needs of Indian society: such efforts will surely constitute a step toward a more secure and abundant future.

Drone demonstrations and training in Sierra Leone, in collaboration with the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation and Njala University. Fixed-wing drones are often used because of their long flight range and easy maintenance. The company's founder and CEO, KANEKO Yosuke, is in the front row, far left.

DRONE SURVEILLANCE OF MALARIA:

A JAPANESE STARTUP'S GLOBAL HEALTH EFFORTS

Malaria is killing people and hampering economic growth in Africa. To eradicate this infectious disease, a Japanese startup has been utilizing drone technology.

Malaria ranks with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and tuberculosis as one of the world's three major infectious diseases. *Plasmodium falciparum*, a parasite carried by mosquitoes, breeds in red blood cells, causing a high fever and other symptoms that often lead to death if not treated promptly and appropriately. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 247 million people worldwide were infected with malaria in 2021, of whom 619,000 died. Ninety percent of malaria cases are concentrated in Africa, posing a serious threat to the health of Africans and stunting social development through higher medical costs, absenteeism among children, and a decline in the labor force.

SORA Technology, a Japanese startup, has joined the fight against malaria. The company has developed SORA Malaria Control (*sora* meaning "sky" in Japanese), a service that combines aerial drone images with multiple AI technologies to efficiently detect and manage puddles with a considerable risk of harboring mosquito larvae. Since 2022, SORA Technology has been running a pilot project to implement this service in Sierra Leone, a country on the coast of Western Africa. While the WHO has recognized larval source management (LSM) as a highly effective method, it is not yet in widespread use due to the

labor costs involved in finding puddles and spraying insecticides, not to mention the large amount of insecticides required for such a task. But SORA Malaria Control can reduce those costs significantly, which bodes well for the implementation of LSM. SORA Technology plans to complete its pilot project in 2024, obtain funding from local government agencies and international donors, then begin full-scale project implementation. As mosquitoes and water transmit many other infectious diseases in addition to malaria, such as cholera and dengue fever, research is underway to apply SORA Malaria Control to the building of surveillance systems for those transmissible diseases as well.

Mary Yeboah Asantewaa, from Ghana, works as a Health Tech/Africa Business Specialist at SORA Technology. She said, "I joined SORA Technology because I wanted to engage in Africa-related work for a tech company that's committed to global health." As the only African employee, she is working hard to build a network for the effective use of drone technology on the continent. SORA Technology signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Senegal's Institut Pasteur de Dakar in January 2023. The MOU states that both parties will initiate discussions and explore innovative collaboration on the use of drones as a tool to prevent future infectious disease outbreaks and improve public health in rural Africa. Earlier, SORA Technology had concluded an MOU on the "Establishment of Medical Drone Infrastructure in Sierra Leone" with Sierra Leone's Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation and Njala University, to build drone infrastructure with the primary purpose of delivering medical supplies. The company plans to continue researching the operation of SORA Malaria Control in collaboration with academia, and to work with the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research in Ghana on measures to combat a new species of mosquito, *Anopheles stephensi*, that has appeared in Ghana.

SORA Technology's efforts were accepted because of the trust that Japan has built up over many years of international cooperation. Asantewaa said, "We Africans need the cooperation of the Japanese government and Japan's superior technology, such as that provided through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)." Japan will continue to focus on cooperation at both the national-government and private-sector levels to eradicate malaria and other infectious diseases.

Left: Drone flight tests in Sierra Leone. Since multicopter drones have an advantage over fixed-wing drones in terms of imaging accuracy, both may be used depending on the situation.
Right: SORA Malaria Control utilizes several image analysis technologies to determine the parameters of puddles, including depth, temperature, and the surrounding vegetation, in order to assess the risk of mosquito larvae breeding.

Japan has a long history of medical cooperation in Africa, having established the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research in Ghana in 1979 to study infectious diseases. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida visited the institute this May.

Mary Yeboah Asantewaa became interested in healthcare after volunteering at a hospital while a student at the University of Ghana. She studied in Japan through the Japan Africa Dream Scholarship program, a project launched in 2017 by the African Development Bank and the Government of Japan, where she earned a master's degree in public health. Based on such a background, she focuses on leveraging drone technology and data analytics to bridge healthcare gaps and empower communities through SORA Technology.

UTILIZING MICROORGANISMS TO PURIFY WATER AND ENHANCE PUBLIC HEALTH

A Japanese researcher has been promoting a method called the ecological purification system to purify water utilizing the activities of small organisms. What is this low-tech but smart solution that produces safe and affordable drinking water to help protect people's health?

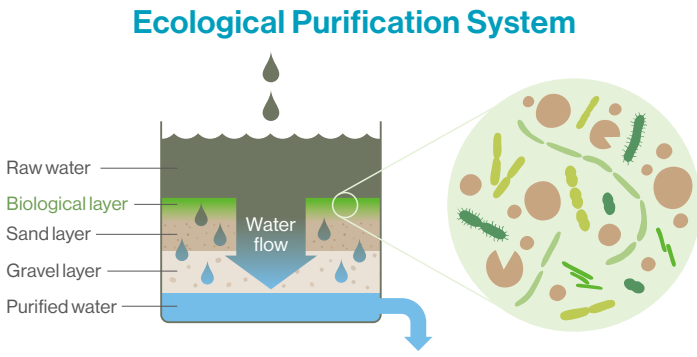
Ensuring access to safe and affordable drinking water is one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but it has yet to be achieved for 2 billion people worldwide.

"In places without safe access to this vital resource, slight improvements to water for drinking and cooking can reduce instances of diarrhea or dermatological diseases. You'll then see a change in people's health awareness. The key is promoting sustainable, do-it-yourself technologies and fostering awareness," says NAKAMOTO Nobutada, Professor Emeritus of Shinshu University. As a leading researcher on biological purification through slow sand filtration, Nakamoto has worked to build sustainable water purification systems in such developing countries as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Fiji, and Samoa.

Slow sand filtration, a water purification technique invented in the U.K. during the 19th century, was thought to physically remove contamination by slowly

NAKAMOTO Nobutada, who has been disseminating the ecological purification system within developing countries, is pictured at the Someya Water Treatment Plant in Ueda City, Nagano Prefecture, where he has been conducting research for decades. The plant uses the ecological purification system (EPS). After 100 years of operation, the plant is still delivering clean water to citizens. THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The Japanese government is promoting global health as a priority area of international cooperation. In the Global Health Strategy set forth in May 2022, it called for the strengthening of efforts toward tackling the world's water and sanitation problems. JICA has been encouraging the use of EPS for water treatment. Nakamoto (right photo, far right) visited Fiji as a JICA expert and gave direct guidance to local officials. Since then, 100 Fijian villages have built biofiltration water purification facilities by using EPS.



filtering water down through pebble and sand layers. It was known that microorganisms in the upper layer of sand break down and remove pathogens and dirt, but Nakamoto, an expert on algae, noticed that algae also assisted in the process. The water became tastier when algae multiplied in copious quantities at a water treatment plant that had stopped using algicide. Through photosynthesis, the algae created an oxygen-rich environment in which microorganisms accelerate decomposition.

Nakamoto decided to rename the "slow sand filtration" process because of his assertion that the original term is not in fact associated with the food chain works as a filter, and that the actual purification in biological active layer takes less time than one might imagine. His new term for the process, then, is the "ecological purification system (EPS)," and he has been introducing it to the world.

Since the components of EPS can be constructed without the use of chemicals or machinery, and since it features easy maintenance and high resilience to disasters, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been working on transferring the technology to, and disseminating it within, developing countries. Nakamoto has cooperated with training programs in Okinawa Prefecture for trainees invited from Fiji and Samoa. He said, "It was good to hold the training in Okinawa. The trainees could drink real filtered water in a subtropical environment similar to their own, and realized that they could maintain such a system themselves." Later, as one of JICA's experts, Nakamoto visited the two countries to follow up on the training. There, he provided guidance to local managers and handed over simple illustrations that he had prepared to ensure that the technology would remain in use.

The Clean Water Supply System, a compact water purification system that Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd. is deploying in developing countries in Asia and Africa to solve water-related problems, also employs the ecological filtration method. The system has steadily spread because residents can manage it themselves. Currently, 45 units have been installed in 15 countries. Having safe, managed water available nearby will not only raise awareness of hygiene and prevent epidemics, but also free women and children from the heavy burden of fetching water.

Japan will continue to make international contributions to build societies in which all people have sustainable access to safe water.

TAKING PRACTICAL STEPS FOR ACHIEVING A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In early April of 2023, the second meeting of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP) was held in Tokyo. Amid increasingly severe circumstances for advancing nuclear disarmament, the IGEP aims to facilitate open and candid discussions concerning a concrete path toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons among experts from both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states, which go beyond their respective countries' positions.

As the global security environment becomes increasingly severe—with the threat of the use of nuclear weapons increasing and the division of the international community deepening further—we are facing the harsh reality of nuclear disarmament. Yet, we must take the path toward a world without nuclear weapons, however difficult it may be. This is the very reason why the Government of Japan established the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP). The IGEP serves as an opportunity for participants from nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states to exchange ideas and thoughts beyond their respective national positions and engage in candid discussions concerning a concrete path toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. At the first meeting, held in Hiroshima in December 2022, the IGEP members analyzed the current international situation and security environment surrounding nuclear disarmament, while also having candid discussions regarding challenges in promoting nuclear disarmament and priorities on the nuclear disarmament front.

From April 4 to 5, the second meeting of the IGEP was held in Tokyo. At this meeting, frank and in-depth discussions were held on the importance of maintaining

Prime Minister Kishida (second from the right) receives a courtesy call by the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP) on the occasion of the second meeting held in Tokyo in April. As a Prime Minister from Hiroshima, he has been making realistic and practical efforts to foster the momentum of the international community for nuclear disarmament. He attended the 10th NPT Review Conference in August 2022 as the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so.

and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in light of the current, extremely severe security environment and the situation surrounding the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), with a view to making a positive contribution to the next NPT review process, which will start with the first Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference scheduled at the end of July this year. "The discussion was extremely lively and substantial. We would like to propose as many specific measures as possible," said SHIRAISHI Takashi, Chancellor of the Prefectural University of Kumamoto, after the meeting, which he chaired.

The members agreed that it would be meaningful to compile a specific message to provide input to the first Preparatory Committee. Then, on April 21, they released the "IGEP Message," urging states to prioritize efforts along with the following pillars in the next NPT review cycle: (1) reinforcing and expanding norms, including the commitment to not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, (2) taking concrete measures, including engagement in dialogue on establishing new arms control arrangements, and (3) revitalizing/strengthening the NPT review process.

During a courtesy call by the IGEP members on the occasion of the second IGEP meeting, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his view that it is important to steadily promote realistic and practical efforts, including those related to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

A monument of flowers to welcome the G7 Hiroshima Summit was installed in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which has facilities and monuments that explain the history of the atomic bombing of 1945. In its message released on April 21, the IGEP urged states to increase awareness of the horrendous consequences of nuclear weapon use, drawing upon the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ATSUSHI MURAKAWA/AFLO

Group photo from the first meeting of the IGEP, held in Hiroshima in December 2022. The experts—from both nuclear-weapon states such as the United States, Russia, India, and China, and non-nuclear-weapon states such as Argentina and New Zealand—attentively listened to a testimony given by Ms. YAHATA Teruko, who suffered the atomic bombing in Hiroshima at the age of eight. The members also offered flowers to the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims and made a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. THE MAINICHI NEWSPAPERS/AFLO

He also expressed his intention to make progress in accordance with the "Hiroshima Action Plan," which he proposed at the 10th NPT Review Conference last August as the first step of a realistic road map for a world without nuclear weapons, as well as other initiatives.

Circumstances for advancing nuclear disarmament are becoming increasingly severe. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has the responsibility to take the lead in the efforts by the international community to realize a world without nuclear weapons. At the "Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation" session of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in April in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, the G7 reaffirmed its commitment to the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and Japan's "Hiroshima Action Plan" was received as a welcome contribution by the G7 members. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Japan, together with the world's leaders, will send a strong message from Hiroshima—which, along with Nagasaki, was devastated by the atomic bomb—that the scourge of nuclear weapons must never be allowed to happen again, and will continue to take steps forward to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

On March 21, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio visited Kyiv, Ukraine, to hold a summit with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. President Zelenskyy said at a joint press conference, "I am delighted that the visit took place when Japan holds the G7 presidency and is a member of the UN Security Council."
ROMAN PILIPEY/GETTY IMAGES

JAPAN CONTINUES TO STAND WITH UKRAINE

To demonstrate Japan's ongoing support for Ukraine, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio visited the war-torn country in March. As the G7 presidency this year, Japan will lead the way in creating a united front to restore international peace and order and will continue to provide a wide range of assistance, taking advantage of its experience and expertise.

"I very much hoped to visit Ukraine before the G7 Hiroshima Summit to speak in person with President Zelenskyy and directly convey Japan's solidarity and unwavering support for Ukraine," said Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio at a joint press conference held immediately after a summit during his visit to Kyiv, Ukraine, on March 21. At the invitation of Prime Minister Kishida, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made clear his intention to participate online in the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May.

At the press conference, Prime Minister Kishida said, "Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundations of the international order. As the G7 presidency, Japan has renewed its determination to exercise leadership to fully defend the international order based on the rule of law." He also stated that the G7 leaders "will be prepared to issue a united message" at the Summit in May.

Since Russia's full-scale aggression began, Japan has supported Ukraine in numerous ways. While there are restrictions on the supply of equipment with the capacity to kill or wound as stipulated by its "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and

Technology," Japan has been providing Ukraine with bulletproof vests, helmets, drones, and so on. Japan has also supplied equipment, including generators to overcome the power shortages and broadcasting equipment to enhance democracy in Ukraine. Additionally, Japan is providing Ukraine with mine detection equipment and technical training, thereby applying its experience in mine actions and reconstruction cooperation in conflict-affected areas. In February, Japan announced roughly 5.5 billion U.S. dollars of financial support to Ukraine; including some 900 million dollars in humanitarian assistance and assistance for recovery and reconstruction, Japan's Ukraine-related assistance totaled 7.1 billion dollars. During his recent visit to the country, Prime Minister Kishida announced an additional 470 million dollars in bilateral grant aid in a holistic assistance package which includes support to the energy sector and 30 million dollars for non-lethal defense equipment assistance through NATO trust fund.

The Russia's aggression has also caused tremendous damage to agriculture in Ukraine, normally one of the world's largest grain-producing regions, leading to an international food crisis. In response, Japan procured Ukrainian sunflower and corn seeds to distribute them to the country's smallholder farmers, prioritizing women and youths. Recovering the country's production capacity in agriculture—a key Ukrainian industry—will help improve the global food supply.

Meanwhile, local governments and private organizations throughout Japan have accepted over 2,300 evacuees from Ukraine thus far. With displacement becoming protracted, the Government of Japan decided in February to grant a one-year extension of living-expense support to those Ukrainian evacuees who have no relatives to rely upon in the country. Also, Prime Minister Kishida, during a stop in Poland after his visit to Ukraine, announced that Japan would provide ODA directly to Poland, which has become a frontline base for humanitarian aid to Ukraine, as a way to support the increasing burden and vulnerability of its neighboring countries.

Above: Ukraine continues to experience massive power shortages due to Russian attacks on its power plants. The Government of Japan has provided generators to the country through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help Ukrainians in the bitter cold, and has provided transformer equipment to restore power lines. JICA
Right: Cambodian personnel demonstrate how to use Japan's latest mine detectors during a training session for mine-clearing experts from the Ukrainian government in anticipation of the country's recovery and reconstruction. Japan has cooperated with Cambodia in eradicating landmines for more than 20 years since the end of that country's civil war. JICA

Khot'na Anastasiya, a Ukrainian woman who came to Japan in 2002 and now lives in Hiroshima, is heartbroken by the devastation in her home country. Her parents and younger brother still live there. "More than anything, I want for peace. In Hiroshima, peace education is taking root and children have a chance to listen to atomic bomb survivors, for example, which I think is wonderful."

The situation of the fight to restore justice remains unpredictable. During Prime Minister Kishida's visit, Japan and Ukraine upgraded their bilateral relationship to a "special global partnership." As Prime Minister Kishida stated in Kyiv, Japan will continue supporting and working with Ukraine in a way that is uniquely Japanese until peace returns to that beautiful land.

"I deeply appreciate Japanese government's humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. My sister also evacuated to Hiroshima a year ago and I feel the warm welcome and support of the city and the local people," said Khot'na Anastasiya (right), a Ukrainian residing in Hiroshima.

Left: Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and YAMAZAKI Koetsu (president of F-REI, second from left), among others, attend the opening ceremony of F-REI. THE ASAHI SHINBUN

Bottom: Developing innovative technical capacity is one of F-REI's major functions. Prime Minister Kishida visited the National Institute of Technology, Fukushima College, which has agreed to work with F-REI. There, he listened to some of the students' presentations and gave them words of encouragement, saying, "I hope you have fun as you improve your skills and carve out a bright future."

CREATIVE RECONSTRUCTION

BRINGS HOPES AND DREAMS TO LIFE IN FUKUSHIMA

With its aim of "creative reconstruction" following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011, the Fukushima Institute for Research, Education and Innovation (F-REI) was recently established as a base for world-leading research and development. As a "control tower" for the research facilities in Fukushima Prefecture, F-REI will lead to further industrialization and technical education, contributing to the reconstruction of the prefecture and the entire Tohoku region.

Twelve years have passed since the huge earthquake that struck eastern Japan on March 11, 2011. On April 1 of this year—with the backdrop of delicate cherry blossoms adorning the areas affected by the disaster—an organization was set up as a new driving force for reconstruction: Fukushima Institute for Research, Education and Innovation (F-REI), whose goal is to serve as an R&D center for advanced, world-class technologies. The institute is expected to play a pivotal role in the development of the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework, a national project that aims to create industries in the Hamadori area, a coastal region in Fukushima Prefecture that was severely damaged by the tsunami-caused accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (NPS).

The opening ceremony, held in Namie Town, Fukushima, was attended by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio, who remarked, "F-REI aims to be a world-class 'center of excellence for creative restoration' that will strengthen Japan's scientific and technological capabilities and industrial competitiveness, while emboldening hopes and dreams for realizing the reconstruction of Fukushima and Tohoku."

F-REI's mission is, as the prime minister noted, to become a world-class center of excellence for creative reconstruction. According to YAMAZAKI Koetsu, appointed as F-REI's first president, "Creative reconstruction is not simply about restoring things to their original state, but is instead about aiming for even

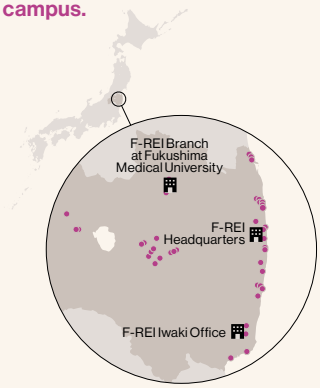
greater heights. That is why I believe it is important to demonstrate how we can make our presence felt both domestically and internationally."

F-REI has four functions. The first is to promote world-class research and development, and the second is to use the results gained from this research for social implementation and industrialization. While creating new industries and accelerating the development of existing ones, F-REI will pave the way toward the further reconstruction of Hamadori, Fukushima, and the whole Tohoku region. Meanwhile, F-REI's third function is to develop human capacity, specifically the young people who will be instrumental in building the future.

And finally, its fourth function is to act as a "control tower" for the many different research institutes in Fukushima, including such national entities as the Fukushima Renewable Energy Institute, AIST and the Fukushima Regional Collaborative Research Center of the National Institute for Environmental Studies. Those institutions serve as regional campuses for F-REI to realize the creation of a unique place where research, demonstration, and implementation are carried out together, and to share the knowledge gained thereby with the wider world. "Our role is to deepen research as a whole, while avoiding any overlap with research that has already been carried out in this region," said Yamazaki.

F-REI's budget scale for the seven years of its medium-term plan through 2029 is approximately 100 billion yen, and the aim is to establish a research system consisting of about 50 research groups. The five key areas for research are: (1) robotics; (2) agriculture, forestry and fisheries; (3) energy; (4) radiation science, medicine and drug development, and industrial applications for radiation; and (5) the collection and dissemination of data and knowledge on nuclear disasters. For example, in the field of robotics and drones, there are plans to hold a global contest to find the absolute best technologies for next-generation mobility to be used in harsh environments after disasters strike.

Consolidating the research institutions scattered around Fukushima into a large-scale campus.



Five research themes undertaken by F-REI

- Robotics
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- Energy
- Radiation Science, Medicine and Drug Development, & Industrial Applications for Radiation
- Collection and Dissemination of Data and Knowledge on Nuclear Disasters


And in the area of nuclear disasters, F-REI has opened a branch office at Fukushima Medical University as its first organization devoted to conducting radioecology research. "I believe that it is our responsibility as Japanese people to preserve the data from Fukushima as a legacy, so that, in the unlikely event of another disaster, people can say that it was useful," affirms Yamazaki.

To secure internationally renowned researchers from Japan and overseas, and to have them settle down and work on research in Fukushima, the environment to receive them must be improved in multiple respects, including housing, medical institutions and schools. "Everything, including the provision of facilities, has yet to happen, but that's why we all think it's so exciting. I want F-REI to be involved in regional development so that we can become a symbol of creative reconstruction, by restoring people's affluent lifestyles and enabling them to enjoy a life of multiculturalism."

With high expectations from the local community, the small steps taken now by F-REI will eventually lead to great strides involving industry, academia, and government to produce new value. Such is the future we can all look forward to.

Yonomori district in Tomioka Town, Fukushima Prefecture, is famous for its cherry blossoms. Due to the accident 12 years ago at the Fukushima Daiichi NPS, most of the district was designated as a "difficult-to-return zone," with parts of it being designated as Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Bases, but after the evacuation order of these bases was lifted on April 1, it once again became possible for people to live among the cherry trees of Yonomori. By May 1 of this year, the evacuation orders had been lifted for all the reconstruction and revitalization bases in the prefecture. THE MAINICHI NEWSPAPERS

At Jinseki International School (JINIS), the language used in the classroom depends on the individual theme and the grade level. In every class, teachers encourage students to take the initiative to learn independently through their experiences. JINIS

CULTIVATING FUTURE GLOBAL TALENT

WITH JAPANESE VALUES

With the aim of fostering new types of talent to contribute to an increasingly borderless world, Japan's first full-boarding primary school, which offers bilingual education, is now gaining widespread attention. Here we shed light on the advantages of young children living together and learning in an international atmosphere, and the reasons why Hiroshima Prefecture hosts pioneering initiatives that promote international education.

We are entering an era in which, as technological innovations and other changes make the world increasingly borderless, it is becoming ever more important for children to acquire a global mindset from an early age, and, amid advancements in AI and robot technologies, to develop creativity and an inquisitive mind. Accordingly, interest in international schools has been piqued in Japan in recent years. Attracted by what they offer—the opportunity to learn English while living in Japan, an international environment, and a curriculum that emphasizes inquiry-based learning—more and more parents are enrolling their children in such schools. Various kinds of international schools are now opening throughout Japan: not only branches of prestigious European learning institutions, but also schools with uniquely "Japanese" features.

One such school is Jinseki International School (JINIS), which opened in 2020 in Hiroshima Prefecture, western Japan. The first full-boarding primary school in Japan, JINIS's major trait is that despite its being primarily international in nature, it also attaches importance to teaching the Japanese language and culture. "Understanding local culture and history is an extremely important criterion for people working on the global stage. It is a source of identity and is also essential to understanding the culture and

SUEMATSU Minako, chairperson of JINIS, founded the school in 2020. She said, "I want to deliver students a kind of learning that is based on experiences, as opposed to just overloading them with knowledge, in a safe and open environment." JINIS

history of other countries, which is crucial in building good relations. We want to nurture those seeds during the primary school years, when children acquire their physical and mental foundations, by providing them with various experiences," said SUEMATSU Minako, the school's founder and chairperson.

The classes taught at JINIS are based on the national curriculum guidelines of Japan, and aim to incorporate the guidelines of the International Primary Curriculum, which is widely used in international schools around the world and places priority on an exploratory style of learning that looks deeply into themes from multiple perspectives. About 40% of the classes are conducted in Japanese, and importance is also placed on hands-on classes on elements of Japanese culture such as the traditional tea ceremony and calligraphy. On the lush green grounds of the campus located on the Jinseki Plateau, extracurricular activities in nature are organized after school and on weekends, such as seasonal farming experiences and outdoor pursuits.

It is precisely because JINIS is a boarding school that students can engage in such a broad range of experiences, as it holistically arranges curricular and extracurricular schedules, which include weekends. "Of course, some people think that primary school children are too young for boarding school. But allowing professionals to thoroughly guide and provide children with the education and opportunities they need has arguments in its favor," said Suematsu, who had her own child attend a boarding school in Switzerland.

Many other new initiatives in international education are successfully being launched in Hiroshima. They include the 2019 opening of a public boarding school called the Hiroshima Global Academy—an integrated junior/senior high school that is International Baccalaureate-accredited—and the founding of the Thunderbird School of Global Management-Arizona State University-Hiroshima University Global Initiative in 2022. Regarding her choice of Hiroshima for the location of JINIS, Suematsu, who was born and raised in the prefecture, explained that "Hiroshima is like a condensed version of Japan. It has diverse nature, from a mild ocean to snowy mountains, and there is easy access to both the Kansai and Kyushu regions. At the same time, as the site of the world's first A-bombing in 1945, it has a long history of sending messages out to the world about the importance of peace. Students can experience all those various aspects. It was only after I left my hometown that I realized what a blessed environment I had grown up in."

Top: JINIS boasts an expansive campus on Jinseki Plateau, about a 90-minute drive from Hiroshima City. Currently, 44 students between the ages of six and 12 live and study together here. JINIS
Bottom: In the dormitory, students live together in double or triple rooms, where they learn to adopt regular routines and become well mannered. JINIS

Many students at JINIS hope to attend boarding school overseas after graduating, but they can also go on to middle school in Japan. "There is one student who, already knowing both English and Japanese, wants to study one more language from middle school and go on to work someday for the United Nations," said Suematsu. "There are so many future paths available to them. It is up to the individual student to decide which one to follow."

Left: After school and on weekends, students can pursue a diversity of outdoor activities such as sports, farming, and insect collecting. Field trips, which include visiting a local temple or an art festival, are also regularly planned. JINIS
Right: Emphasis is also placed on peace education at JINIS. In addition to regular classes, students in the upper grades take field trips to Hiroshima City, touring such sites as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which recounts the history of the atomic bomb that was dropped on the city in 1945, and the Genbaku Dome (background), the damage to which has been symbolically preserved. JINIS

TAZAWA Marika runs Kurabito Stay. She hopes that her work as an independent female entrepreneur will inspire other women in outlying parts of Japan.

EXPERIENCE SAKE BREWING AT THE WORLD'S FIRST

SAKE-BREWERY HOTEL

Japan's border control measures against COVID-19 have ended. As inbound tourism recovers, a sake-brewery hotel in the city of Saku in Nagano Prefecture is garnering attention. We delve into a new kind of tourism that emphasizes firsthand experiences and interaction with local residents.

In Japan, visitors can enjoy the country's unique culture and abundant natural surroundings without worrying about public safety or access to transport. Japan was ranked number one out of 117 countries by the World Economic Forum for the first time in the 2021 Travel & Tourism Development Index, and on April 29 of this year, ended its border control measures against COVID-19.

If you're planning a trip to Japan, you should definitely visit the outlying regions; there are alluring places throughout the country featuring beautiful nature, rich history, and unique cultural heritage. One such place is Saku, a city in Nagano Prefecture that is home to Kurabito Stay, the world's first sake-brewery hotel where guests—who come from all over the world—can try their hand at making sake while staying at a traditional brewing facility.

TAZAWA Marika, who was born in the prefecture, runs Kurabito Stay. After working for a travel agency and a wine trading company elsewhere, she returned to her home prefecture

Guests spending the night at Kurabito Stay are able to enjoy Saku sake whenever they want. The brewery also holds a sake-tasting seminar.

to work in local government as a quasi-civil servant for the national government's local vitalization cooperative program. Meanwhile, she studied tourism management at a destination marketing organization (DMO) leadership school sponsored by the prefectural government.

Tazawa had first learned about the problems of mass tourism when working as a company employee. The competition to sell travel packages at low prices was putting financial and other strains on certain destinations, resulting in lower tourist satisfaction. Wanting to put an end to that vicious cycle, Tazawa looked to the European towns she had traveled to so many times since her student days. She said, "People in Europe's regional cities are proud of their hometowns and their history. That's why they're very lively and not selling themselves short."

Inspired by wine tourism, a thriving business in Europe, she envisioned creating a tourist area based on sake. "Sake is unique to our country. After visiting over 1,000 tourist destinations in 50 countries around the world, I was sure that making sake in a historic brewery would be a one-of-a-kind experience that would inspire the rest of the world," she said. There are 13 sake breweries in Saku, all with a long history. Tazawa took over an old building attached to one such brewery that had formerly served as sleeping quarters for brewers, and converted it into a hotel, launching operations in March 2020.

Hotel guests at Kurabito Stay can enter the operating brewery and join in the actual process of making sake for sale. Priced at 55,000 yen for one night, it's not on the cheap side, but many people come for the unique experience. Among them are numerous repeat customers. Simultaneous interpretation in English is available—the hotel thus has a good reputation among international travelers, with 70% of the guests currently coming from abroad.

"We focus on attracting one person who will stay for 100 hours, rather than 100 people who will stay for an hour each," said Tazawa. The hotel serves breakfast (and dinner is included in some plans), but for other meals, guests receive a map of the neighborhood so they can visit nearby establishments on their own, thus helping the entire community. "It makes me happy to hear a guest say that this is a nice town."

Left: Guests can mingle around the large round table on the first floor of Kurabito Stay. Guestrooms are on the second floor.
Right: Formerly serving as brewers' accommodation attached to a venerable sake brewery that remained in business for more than 330 years, Kurabito Stay has been renovated into a hotel.

A brewer offers instruction to a guest in making sake using methods handed down from the Edo Period (early 17th century to mid-19th century). Depending on the season, activities include such processes as washing rice, making the yeast mash, and so on.

In the future, she plans to offer cycling tours to allow visitors to enjoy even more of Saku's scenery, as well as an academic course to teach them about sake brewing in depth. Indicating her desire to expand the business, she said, "There are other sake-producing regions in Japan with long histories like Saku's. I'd like to be involved in regional revitalization centered on breweries in other communities."

When you come to Japan, why not spend more time in one place to experience a facet of the culture that has been nurtured and passed down over generations?

UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER EXPERIENCES AWAIT YOU IN JAPAN

Its landscapes changing in fascinating ways, Japan offers a rich variety of enjoyable activities during the summer, from subtropical resorts to cool 3,000 meter-class mountains. Many enduring folk dances and performances can also be seen in this season.

SUBTROPICAL ISLANDS

Surrounded by emerald green seas in southernmost Japan, Okinawa Prefecture is one of Asia's preeminent resort areas. Taketomijima, a small Okinawan island with a population of about 300 people, is a popular destination that retains the prefecture's original scenery of houses with red-tiled roofs, stone walls made of coral, and white sand roads. A rocking ride in a water buffalo-drawn cart through hamlets blazing with bougainvillea is absolutely unforgettable. AFLO

SPECTACULAR MOUNTAINS

Mountains cover around 70% of the Japanese land area, with 23 summits above 3,000 m. Of these, Mount Tateyama in Toyama Prefecture has been revered as a holy mountain since ancient times, and is a site of spiritual practices. Today, with public transportation reaching an altitude of 2,450 m, many tourists visit after the snow has melted, drawn by beautiful ponds, rare alpine plants, and breathtaking scenery.

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RITUAL DANCES

In the summer, folk dances are held throughout Japan praying for the repose of the deceased. Also intended to pray for a good harvest, the end of plagues, and safety from disasters, as well as to strengthen local spiritual forces, dances and other folk arts have been handed down over the centuries in every region. In November 2022, 41 such events were inscribed on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as "Furyu-odori, ritual dances imbued with people's hopes and prayers." The photograph shows the Ayakomai dance in Kashiwazaki City, Niigata Prefecture, passed down for about five centuries, with some features having a tantalizing resemblance to early *Kabuki*.

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