

The Africa Now festival, held in Hibiya Park, June 2018. In the event, live music, dancing, tourism and handicrafts were introduced. Japan's Foreign Minister, Taro Kono, attended the opening of the event and visited each booth of 38 African Embassies.



FEATURE >>> Japan in Africa

Uniting Africa and Japan

New initiatives promote talent-exchange and human resource development

Japan supports Africa with issues ranging from poverty to conflict resolution despite the two regions' physical and cultural distances. New levels of stability and more developed economies close the gap and open doorways to further development.

In June, the African Diplomatic Corps hosted a festival called Africa Now in Hibiya Park, Tokyo. The event aimed to bring the two regions even closer, introducing African culture to Japan. It drew reasonably sized crowds, and Embassies from 38 African countries based in Tokyo

showcased their uniqueness through food, fashion, and lifestyle.

With a similar goal in mind, the Japanese government established the African Business Education Initiative (ABE Initiative) in 2014, and it is already yielding strong results. For eligible young African men and women, this two-year program provides an opportunity to study at Japanese graduate schools and intern with Japanese companies. Between 2014 and 2017, the program welcomed 1,100 Africans. It's also an excellent opportunity for young Africans to immerse themselves in

Japanese culture. The experiences and networks they develop will serve them in building bridges between Japanese and African businesses.

Nurturing youth and offering them deep knowledge of both Japan and Africa will provide unlimited employment opportunities. These initiatives evolve into a mutual support system in society, contributing to industrial development. It's an initiative designed to bring the continent of Africa a little closer to Japan. *



"The ABE Initiative improves Africa's relationship with Japan."

Antony Karanja ABE Initiative Alumnus

"Africa and Japan are far apart, not only geographically, but also culturally and socially," says Antony Karanja, an ABE Initiative alumnus from Kenya. "The ABE Initiative is narrowing that gap by facilitating mutual understanding. I believe good communication builds strong bridges that unite cultures, regions, and people."

Karanja was one of the first students to come to Japan with ABE Initiative in 2014. After completing his master's degree at Kyushu University School of Economics, he went to work for Techlight Mobile Lighting Co., Ltd. in Fukuoka. The company is looking towards new opportunities in Africa,

and Karanja is providing them with research and insights into the market.

"More than aid, what Africa needs now is business. Aid fosters dependency, but business provides an opportunity for each country to use its own resources and develop the necessary infrastructure for success," Karanja explains.

"Both Japanese and African companies are eager to work with each other. However, the cultural differences can be a barrier to business success. I hope to bridge that gap."



"These interactions provide new ways to build bridges between Japan and Africa."

Peter Maina Wanjohi ABE Initiative Alumnus

Peter Maina Wanjohi, one of the students from ABE Initiative's third batch in 2016, plans to start his own business in the future. He's considering fruit farming, which is gaining traction in Kenya. However, shipping fresh fruit can be risky and cost-prohibitive, so he is also considering other options.

"Partnerships with Japanese companies could add value to fruit products," he continues, "which would increase the chances of success."

At Waseda University, Wanjohi conducted research on economic results of education. During his stay in Japan, he also completed internships at AGC and Kewpie Corporation, learning about their rich product lines,

highly efficient production systems, and sustainable recycling efforts. Japan impressed Wanjohi from a business perspective, but the culture of consideration and courtesy left a lasting impression.

"ABE Initiative offered me the opportunity to experience business and interact with a new culture. What I learnt in Japan was great," says Wanjohi. Now that he understands more about Japanese business practices, he would like to return to Africa to support both Japanese and Kenyan interests.

