

At the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, local municipalities will become host towns welcoming athletes of teams from all over the world with the spirit of *omotenashi* (hospitality). The city of Nagai,



The Tanzanian team made a special appearance at the Nagai Marathon held in October 2018. Fans lining the roadside were treated with the spectacle of their exceptional speed.

located in the northern part of Japan, became the host town for the Tanzanian team. This is likely because, for more than 20 years, Nagai City has maintained friendly relations with the Republic of Tanzania via its Yamagata-Tanzania Friendship Association.

Bahati Rodgers, a Tanzanian native, was assigned to work on the project and conduct international cultural exchange through sports. As one of the few Sports Exchange Advisors (SEA) in the JET Programme, he provides sports instruction to people of all ages, from children to senior citizens, in Nagai City. In the fall of 2018, he also played his first significant role as a

SEA. As a member of the host town project, Rodgers supported the stay and participation of the Tanzanian team when they were invited to take part in a local marathon. He said, "The team was very impressed with the hospitality of the people in the town. Nagai City will be able to provide everything the Olympic teams need for the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games."

Rodgers had no idea about Nagai City until he came to Japan. Upon arriving to Nagai City and experiencing the city, he said, "I was very impressed with the attraction of Nagai's nature, its mountains, and beautiful paddy-field scenery. The up-and-down terrain is excellent

training for marathon runners." In the winter, Nagai is covered by heavy snow. Being from a tropical country, Rodgers experienced snow here for the first time in his life. He also tested his reflexes by challenging himself to ski.

For the 2020 Olympic Games, he enthusiastically says that he will not only provide the necessary assistance for the Tanzanian team, but also will assist in all preparations for Nagai City as a hosting town. He is passionate about learning Japanese in order to act as a go-between being able to use both Japanese and Swahili.

At the same time, he would like the townspeople of Nagai to become

Right: Nagai City is rich in nature and embraced by beautiful mountains. The local line that goes leisurely through the city is also popular with tourists.

Below: Rodgers says that the allure of sports is being able to communicate through using one's body. Children asking him to, "Come every day" is a testament to his popularity.



more familiar with the country and people of Tanzania. He is also busy interacting with residents of the city beyond sports, doing such activities as teaching Swahili on a local radio program and holding an

English conversation café. He says, "I hope that the friendship between Tanzania and Japan will continue to further flourish even after the 2020 Olympics." ✨

The former school building of Nagai Elementary School is protected as a cultural asset. Currently, it is being used as a venue for the townspeople to gather, and Rodgers also holds an English conversation café here.

GRASSROOTS AMBASSADOR >>> The JET Programme

Tanzanian Athlete Builds Bonds of Friendship with Japan

Yamagata Prefecture's Nagai City will be the host town for the Tanzania team at the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. Bahati Rodgers, who was assigned to work in this area, is engaged in international cultural exchange through sports.



Bahati Rodgers

Born in Tanzania. He studied Physical Education, Sports Science at the University of Dar es Salaam. Since childhood, he has been fascinated by Japanese culture and technology, so he applied for a job as a Sports Exchange Advisor for the JET Programme. He has been assigned to Nagai City since August 2018.



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 2018, the JET Programme welcomed 5,528 participants, and currently there are more than 68,000 alumni from 73 countries living in all parts of the world.



The JET Programme official website
<http://jetprogramme.org/en/>