

Q: Please tell us about yourself and your country.

I am a Kenyan citizen currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Development, with a focus on Economic Development Policy and Management at Nagoya University under the ABE Initiative Scholarship Program that began in September 2014. My interest in this program was driven from the fact that under the auspices of the TICAD V conference in Yokohama in 2013, the Japanese Government and its people at large had decided to invest in African youth so as to build their capacities in business knowledge and skills. What inspired me even more was the prospect of an internship program (which is part of the scholarship), that would grant me an opportunity to work closely with local Japanese businesses interested in investing in Kenya. I feel that this concept is especially unique as it allows for first hand access to the Kenyan business environment, by Japanese businesses who may be interested to work in Africa but are skeptical due to lack of information in business prospects therein. Kenya is one of 54 African States located in the Eastern part of Africa, and is strategically located to serve as the gateway into the East and central part of Africa for all prospective investors. The economy continues to enjoy steady growth rate, forecasted at between 6-7% in a conducive and vibrant environment, topped with one of the most capable human resource in the Continent. It is for these reason that Kenya is well placed as an attractive destination for investment into the diverse sectors of the economy for potential investors.

Q: You are one of the first participants of the ABE Initiative master's degree and internship program. Could you briefly explain your field of study and your expectations after returning to your country?

While in Japan, my studies are focused in the field of International Development, where I continue to benefit immensely from the myriad of experiences brought by students from all over the World including Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. Most notably, the mode of instruction employed at our Graduate School of International Development by our capable and well versed academic staff, has enabled me to gain invaluable insight into trends and issues affecting World Development; and with experiences shared with fellow students, put them into perspective as they relate to tackling similar challenges in the African continent and more specifically Kenya.

Upon completion of my studies, it is hoped that I will participate in the internship program with local company in Japan. In keeping with the goal of the scholarship, I hope

to gain valuable exposure and experience into Japanese business practices that have earned them respect and a glowing tribute as exemplified from successful exports such as Toyota Motor Corporation. Through the internship, I hope to gain practical skills and build a good network with companies that will enable me to play an “ambassadorial” role between them and the business fraternity in Kenya.

Q: You’ve now stayed for around 2 years in Japan. What is your impression about Japan and Japanese people?

As far as my life in Japan is concerned, I must confess that one of my goals of learning the Japanese language has not been realized yet. I however continue to be optimistic despite the rigorous academic schedule that constitutes my degree program. From the perspective of a foreigner, the first thing one notices about the Japanese people is their sense of time and precision. This is a cultural value that permeates within all aspects of life whether it is in a business setting such as meetings or transport system to even more casual based settings such as meeting with friends and colleagues. I have come to respect the respect for time management, though I must say at times I find it rigid especially in the social meetings that have a more relaxed aura around them in Kenya. Their respect for each other is another aspect that I find most intriguing. I guess this stems from the general politeness of the language to holding each other with utmost consideration, and more specifically the elderly. I think that through this culture of respect, it helped to build on trust in relationships which is the driving force behind successful business networks.

Q: Something you would like to say to the people of Japan? (if any)

I would like to thank the Government and people of Japan for granting me this opportunity to pursue my studies. I also extend a warm welcome to all Japanese businessmen and women to visit Kenya; more so, at the end of August during which the TIVAD VI conference will be held in Nairobi. This will provide a good opportunity for Japanese companies to see what my country Kenya and Africa as a whole has showcased in terms of business prospects for partnerships and mutual growth of our respective economies. On a lighter note, I would like to encourage more Japanese to travel abroad more often when an opportunity arises. This in my view would help them broaden their cultural experiences while sharing their uniqueness of Japanese culture and delicious cuisine with the rest of the World (in particular Kenya). I therefore say Welcome to Kenya! (Karibu Kenya!)