



Learning Together for Mutual Benefit

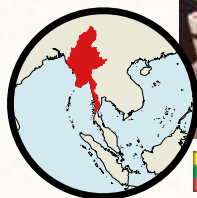
Scholars Connect the World and Japan

Scholars from developing nations have deepened their learning through the links between JICA and universities. Today, they are playing active roles in either their home country or Japan.

At the Forefront of Diplomacy as a Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Mr. Soe Han



Myanmar



Mr. Soe working as Permanent Secretary. As committee chair, his days are heavily scheduled.

Mr. Soe Han was part of the first intake of JDS scholars, and spent two years studying management at the graduate school of the International University of Japan in Niigata Prefecture. He was very surprised to see that Japan had full tertiary education facilities not just in the main cities, but also in rural areas. He really appreciated being able to learn about Japanese culture and lifestyles through interactions with local people. "I love snow, so I tried skiing, and also enjoyed sake, one of Niigata's famous local products," he says, fondly reminiscing on his time in the prefecture. Myanmar has one of the largest numbers of slots allocated under the JDS, and Fellows can receive not just tuition but support for their living expenses in Japan. Mr. Soe is grateful for all the support he received. "Student's majors are related to the needs of Myanmar, in areas that could help solve the problems Myanmar faces. After obtaining a master's degree, it is also possible for qualified scholars to continue on to a doctorate. The greatest asset I gained as a JDS scholar was the network I formed with other students, both from Japan and other countries. It is beneficial in building bilateral relations between Myanmar and Japan."

Mr. Soe was appointed Permanent Secre-

tary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Myanmar in 2019, and his days since then have been very busy. In February 2020, he served as representative of Myanmar at the Seventh Japan-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue held in the Myanmar capital of Nay Pyi Taw. Also in 2020, he participated in online international conferences on COVID-19, reporting on Myanmar's preventative measures and the country's efforts to eliminate it. "As one of the responsible high-level officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I hope to successfully implement Myanmar's foreign policy and promote Myanmar's interests on the international stage," he pointedly notes. Incidentally, a female former JDS Fellow was appointed as Permanent Secretary to the Union Attorney General's Office in December 2019.



Colleagues he met in Japan in his student days are now playing active roles around the world.



With his faculty advisor, on graduating from the International University of Japan in 2004.

Mr. Soe Han

Born in Myanmar. Completed the Masters of Business Management at the International University of Japan in Niigata Prefecture from 2002 to 2004 as part of the first intake of JDS Fellows. In 2019, he became the first former JDS Fellow to be appointed Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Promoting Tourism Development as a Leader



Ms. Shirin Amonzoda



Tajikistan

Giving a lecture at a Tajikistan university.



Ms. Amonzoda and her girls became part of the community when they lived in Beppu.



Ms. Shirin Amonzoda first came to Japan to work in public relations for the Tajikistan Pavilion at Expo 2005 in Aichi Prefecture. She soon fell in love with Japan, and made it her goal to come to the country to study. Her dream was realized when she spent two years at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University's graduate school, from 2014 to 2016. Along with young leaders from around the world, she studied both the theory and practice of public policy, from past to present. "I think the JDS is a very important chance that provides valuable opportunities to female civil servants working in Tajikistan, in a way that allows them to balance their academic and private lives in Japan," says Ms. Amonzoda. During her time as a scholar, she lived with her two daughters in Beppu, Oita Prefecture. She also planned festivals to celebrate the new year for Middle Eastern and central Asian countries, and organized cultural events that featured Tajikistan cooking. "I am very grateful to everyone at the Beppu City Office for actively introducing the culture, traditions, and lifestyle of Tajikistan to Beppu City." During her stay in Japan, there were some difficult times, with both her parents dying in succession, but she overcame the difficulties thanks to the support from those around her.

On returning to Tajikistan, she was appointed as deputy chair of the newly-formed Tourism Development Committee. With the help of

other government ministries and agencies, she created a tourist development strategy that will run until the year 2030, and compiled an action plan to put it into practice. In 2020, she was promoted to chair of this committee.

Asked the significance of studying abroad, Ms. Amonzoda explains, "I researched tourism, public planning and policy in Japan, as well as the role of the government in tourism planning. This research experience in Japan proved very helpful when I was appointed to a key position in tourism development. I feel the skills developed will continue to be of use in the future." She is committed to working for the expansion of the tourism industry in Tajikistan.

As committee chair, her days are filled.



Ms. Shirin Amonzoda

From Tajikistan. Lived in Beppu, Oita Prefecture, as a JDS Fellow from 2014 to 2016, researching Tajikistan tourism development and public policy planning in the graduate school of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. On her return home, she was appointed deputy chair of the Tourism Development Committee in 2017, and in 2020 was promoted to chair (which in Tajikistan is a Cabinet-level post).

About the JDS

The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) invites young public administrators who are expected to become policy makers in their home countries, to study at graduate schools in Japan. It started in 1999 as a grant aid project. Emphasizing the needs of the partner countries, it provides learning in fields related to development issues and key fields in developing nations. In the 2019 academic year, 360 Fellows from 16 nations were hosted by the program. Including both master's and doctoral courses, more than 4,600 Fellows have studied in Japan.



At a Buddhist temple in Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture. She visited Vietnamese migrant communities on an internship in 2017, where she learned about the support measures Hyogo Prefecture offers.



Vietnam

Ms. Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang MEXT Scholarship Student, Kobe University

From Vietnam. After learning English at university, she enrolled in the Area Studies master's program at Vietnam Japan University, specializing in Vietnam. In 2018 she was awarded a MEXT Scholarship to study in Japan, where she is presently researching international labor migration at Kobe University.

To Contribute to Peaceful Bilateral Relations

Ms. Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang

After working as an English teacher, Ms. Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang studied at Vietnam Japan University as one of their first intake of students, and is now in the doctoral course at Kobe University. Her achievements are a testimony to her impressive ambitions.

"I was fortunate enough to secure a job teaching in my study field of English, but it also circumscribed my viewpoints and the approaches available within my field. I felt a more interdisciplinary approach was needed in order to tackle pressing global problems and achieve personal development. Searching for a new path to take, I came across Vietnam Japan University," reflects Ms. Nguyen.

It seems that she had some worries about enrolling in a newly established university, but, as Ms. Ngyuen explained, "Vietnam Japan University emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach for sustainable development which was highly attractive to me. Moreover, the university is a collaboration between Vietnam and Japan involving top universities and supported by JICA. This meant I could access the high-quality education of Japan, but also have it integrated with education in Vietnam. Considering I would also be receiving guidance from experts in sustainable development, and have the total support of JICA, it was an easy decision to enroll."

Her specialization at Vietnam Japan University was Area Studies (Vietnam), a topic she had not previously studied. There were some difficulties with tackling this new field, but she received support from her instructors, both Japanese and Vietnamese, and learnt a lot. She says she was particularly impressed by the instructors' perseverance and their research careers. "I experienced both the Japa-

nese and Vietnamese perspectives in these studies. The impressive levels of effort by the Japanese faculty and their underlying passion for academia, combined well with the flexible approach to problems of the Vietnamese faculty. They were complementary like the right and left hand. Likewise, I aspire to be able to use both those hands well on a daily basis." Ms. Nguyen notes she is still in contact with some of her instructors.

After graduation, she got a MEXT Scholarship from Japan and entered the doctoral program at Kobe University. Her current research field is the protection and support of Vietnamese workers in Japan. This is a complex and topical theme, but Ms. Nguyen is undaunted: "I want to do whatever I can to contribute to improving the policies related to hosting workers in Japan and the relationships between Japanese employers and Vietnamese workers. I believe that deepening mutual understanding and an increasing wealth of cooperation based on harmony between our two countries, will allow Vietnam to achieve sustainable development," she adds, touching on her hopes for the future.



About Vietnam Japan University

An international-level university that symbolizes friendship between Japan and Vietnam. It opened in September 2016, in accordance with the joint Japan-Vietnam declaration. At present, it has eight master's course programs. JICA has been providing technical cooperation since 2016, establishing and operating master's courses with the collaboration from seven universities in Japan. JICA's role includes cooperating the development of the university's organizational system, dispatching Japanese teaching staff, and providing internships in Japan.



Ms. Nguyen interviewing Vietnamese workers (left)



The spread of COVID-19 has prompted a widespread recognition of the preventative effects of handwashing. However, in Uganda the custom of handwashing has not yet taken root. Consequently, the local subsidiary of the Japanese company Saraya has been producing and selling hand sanitizer, as well as providing training for medical practitioners and helping raise awareness at schools and kindergartens. Ms. Ajok has been supporting these activities since the local subsidiary was first established. Then in 2016, she participated in the ABE Initiative to improve her skills even further.

"My main motivation for coming to Japan was due to the lack of experts in public health at Saraya in Uganda. I was able to learn all sorts of things about health and medicine at Nagasaki University. For example, I visited the Philippines and learned how their health system functioned, and understood how cooperation from Japan was contributing to its health system. I was also able to intern at the World Health Organization's Collaboration Center for Infection Prevention and Control at Geneva University Hospital. Over these three-months I learnt a lot about managing infections," Ms. Ajok explains.

She is able to apply a lot of the specialized

knowledge she gained through the Program in her current work. When she proposed a policy that would improve hygiene in medical institutions after returning to Uganda, she explains "I collaborated with a research team from Geneva, and thanks to the research skills I picked up in Japan I was able to present an evidence-based solution."

Her immediate task is to deal with COVID-19, for which hand hygiene is of particular importance. There are only two companies in Uganda making hand sanitizer, and Saraya's high quality product is in great demand. Ms. Ajok describes her present role: "We are currently serving clients from the entire East African region, and there are high expectations towards fighting COVID-19. In addition, we provide expert advice on the location of hand hygiene dispensers in different public places like, schools, banks, offices among others."

In the future, Ms. Ajok hopes to work to disseminate the importance of hygiene in rural communities as well. She also looks forward to working with JICA in the future, saying "I want to continue being a bridge between Africa and Japan."

Ms. Robinah Ajok Chief Hygiene Instructor, Saraya Manufacturing (U) Ltd.

From Uganda. After graduating from university, she joined the local subsidiary of Saraya, a Japanese company. She came to Japan in 2016 to study public health at Nagasaki University. After doing an internship at Saraya's head office, she is now playing an important role as a hygiene expert.



Uganda

She also experienced an internship at Saraya's head office in Japan. "I realized that Japanese people consider efficiency in everything," she says.

Applying the Skills Learned in Japan to Improve Hygiene Back Home

Ms. Robinah Ajok

About the ABE Initiative

In this program, young Africans are invited to Japan to both obtain their master's degree at a Japanese university and get the chance to intern with a Japanese company. The aim is to train human resources for African industry and cultivate "navigators" who will support Japanese businesses in Africa. In the five years since its 2014 inception, more than 1,200 young Africans from 54 countries have come to Japan.



During fieldwork in the Philippines.