

4 Develop Human Resources as Future Leaders

—Youth Invitation Program—



African multinational group of female teachers observes classes at elementary school.

Expanding Invitation Program

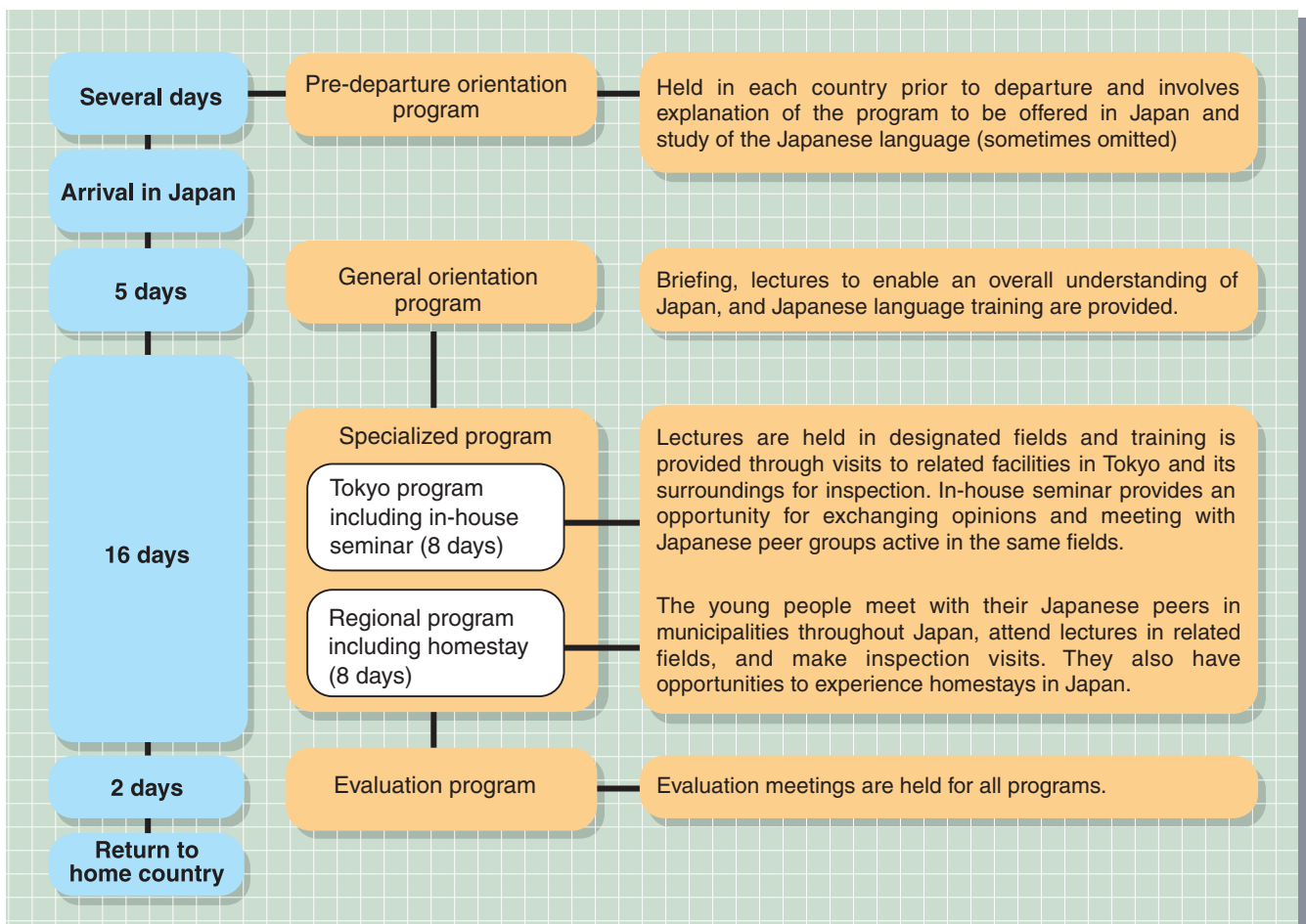
Build Trusting Relationships with Japanese Youths

The Youth Invitation Program is part of JICA's support for personnel training. Young people from developing countries who will lead nation-building in the future are invited to Japan for training in their fields of specialization and to interact with Japanese people. This program is unique in that JICA's coop-

eration features technical cooperation.

During their stay in Japan, the young people who are invited live together with young Japanese people working in the same fields, or they stay in ordinary Japanese homes. They also have the chance to take part in a wide variety of social activities. The Youth Invitation Program is intended to foster human resources in developing countries, to deepen mutual understanding and trust, and to build friendships.

Figure 3-6 Structure of the Youth Invitation Program



Since the program was started in 1984, it has gradually spread to include Asia, Oceania, Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, Saudi Arabia, and the Caucasus. At present around 1,700 young people from approximately 120 countries are taking part in the program, and more than 25,000 have visited Japan since its inception.

Program Runs for 3 Weeks

All the programs take about three weeks, from arrival in



Viet Nam education group of high school teachers observes chemistry lab work.

Japan to departure for home country, excluding locally held pre-departure programs. Young people are invited in groups on the basis of prior classification in line with their special-

Front Line

● Shikoku Youth Invitation Program in Collaboration with Host Organizations

Bright Future Glimpsed through Interaction with Youths from Developing Countries

Youth Invitation Program

Happy Letters from a host organization

In the jurisdiction of the Shikoku Branch Office, seven organizations accepted young people from various countries. We have received numerous happy and touching letters from each organization describing their impressions upon completing the program as a host organization in the Youth Invitation Program. One was from the Ehime Prefectural International Center which accepted 23 young people from Thailand in July and August. Below is the letter we received from the officer in charge.

The summer when we accepted youths from Thailand

Tourism is a major industry promoted nationwide in Thailand. On the other hand, Japan is about to start to work on policy-making in tourism by inviting foreign tourists, recognizing that tourism will be a growing industry in the 21st century. Prior to accepting youths from Thailand, we tried to understand the fundamental differences in the perception of tourism between the two countries, and tried to determine an effective way of exchanging ideas for mutual lasting benefit.

While the young people from Thailand stayed with us, we repeatedly held observations and question and answer discussions comparing the Japanese preference of tourism, programs, characteristics, and relations to other industries and operation methods of the programs in various prefectures, cities, towns and villages to those of Thailand. Through such activities, we have introduced ways to determine the attractions of an area, effective ways to best utilize the characteristics of the area, and how best to promote them using enjoyable stories. However, young people from Thailand seem to feel that Japanese policies toward tourism are not effective enough, probably because of the differences in perception of tourist attractions.

However, some participants commented that they discovered new viewpoints by observing our nature-friendly tourist facilities, including the glass atelier that turns discarded glass bottles into art and the aquarium of freshwater fish that introduces the ecosystem of the area, and industrial tours that facilitate understanding of regional products and companies.

Japanese residents who participated in the in-house seminar were impressed by the high-level of con-



Youths from Thailand at the in-house seminar in Shikoku

sciousness of the Thai participants and learned much from them. Both parties learned from and respected each other on equal ground, which was the main achievement of this program and which will surely lead to a bright future.

I do not expect that each party understood everything of the other in the very limited period of only a few days, however, I sincerely hope that this short summer period provided some opportunities for expanding their potential.

These kinds of letters remind us that the success of this program depends on the enthusiasm and the efforts of the person in charge in the host organization. At the same time, they freshly remind us that we need to continue promoting such activities more aggressively.

(Shikoku Branch Office)

izations, such as education, economics, regional development, administration, agriculture and forestry, and social welfare. In recent years more groups in the field of education, which mostly consist of teachers, have been invited and they compare their situations to Japanese education and exchange opinions with Japanese people on common issues. They are divided into either national or multinational groups such as Africa, Latin America, and Oceania. The standard content of the program is structured as shown in Figure 3-6. Participants are between the ages of 18 and 35, and should not have visited Japan before.

Balance between Training and Exchange

Developing Human Resources through International Exchange

The Youth Invitation Program aims not only to enable participants to increase their knowledge in their fields of specialization but also to foster a better understanding of Japan and the Japanese people, including such aspects as culture and history. One of the main features of the program is a balance between training and exchange. Among the ingredients of the program is a course of Japanese language study in which Japanese volunteers show participants around the areas they are staying while teaching them practical Japanese, and in-house seminars at which participants and young Japanese spend a number of days and nights together to engage in discussions and exchange activities. The participants also have the chance to exchange opinions with employees at the various places that they visit. These features of the program are appreciated by the young people involved.

Another valuable aspect of the program is the chance it gives participants to stay in private homes and experience life in ordinary Japanese households.



Japanese participants visit a radio station where a former Youth Invitation Program participant works (renewed exchange group).

Contribute to Regional Internationalization

The Youth Invitation Program was undertaken by organizations in 46 Japanese prefectures in fiscal 2002. The number of Japanese citizens who have been involved with the invited participants is around 300,000. Study and exchange activities in various parts of the country give participants the opportunity to see Japan as a whole and, at the same time, to come into contact with the distinctive culture and history of the area where they are staying. These activities allow not only the invited participants but also the Japanese participants to experience international cooperation and exchange, contributing to heightened international awareness in the regions. Opportunities to visit schools also help promote education for global understanding.

Today, the Youth Invitation Program plays a leading role in the linkage between Japan's international cooperation activities and its communities with the participation of citizens.

Current State of the Program and Future Directions

Japan-China Relations Deepened by the Start of Acceptance of Young People from China

In fiscal 2002, 1,671 young people were invited to Japan from 115 countries. As a new attempt, in the youth invitation from China, applicants were recruited through public media such as newspapers instead of the conventional recommendations from the Chinese Government. As a result, young people from a wide variety of groups could participate in the invitation program. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-China relations, and 11 related persons on the Japan side, including staff of the host organizations of this program and host families, visited China and held a symposium with 30 Chinese youth participants of the program. At the symposium, various opinions were exchanged regarding the results and future directions of this program, and continuous interaction in the future was agreed upon.

The invitation period was shortened to 23 days starting in fiscal 2002 and a trip to Kyoto and Hiroshima was cancelled. Therefore, expanding specialized programs in Tokyo and local areas is expected.

Alumni Activities and Expanding Renewed Exchange

In each member country of the Association of ASEAN, young people who have participated in the program have

formed alumni associations to carry out vital activities such as exchange projects with Japan and interactions among participants. The Malaysian alumni, in particular, send children of former participants to Japan every year for a homestay program with families of Japanese host groups. The Indonesian alumni program that was incorporated as an NPO is involved in various exchange and cooperation programs under contract with the Japanese Embassy in Indonesia and JICA Indonesia Office.

In fiscal 2002, a study group was sent to three countries, China, Cambodia and Laos, for the purpose of promoting post exchange in which Japanese host groups and their local community and participants and their home countries are able to interact even after the completion of the program. In Cambodia and Laos, possibilities for future cooperation were

discussed in detail, including the building of schools and improving libraries.

There are cases in which the participants of the Youth Invitation Program became members of the National Diet, local assembly members, university professors, high-ranking government official, or executives of private companies. In fiscal 2002, six former Youth Invitation Program participants who work in the media came to Japan from Indonesia and were reunited with their host families.

One of the successful results of this program, which has been carried out for nearly 20 years, is the development of continuous exchange activities and international cooperation. We will further promote public participation in this program in the future.

Front Line

● Osaka Acceptance of Youths at Osaka International Centre

Program Based on Training and Exchange

Youth Invitation Program

Keystone before and after the program

In fiscal 2002, the Osaka International Centre provided general orientation programs and evaluation programs to approximately 40 groups, or about half of all the groups annually invited for the Youth Invitation Program, which totals approximately 1,200 participants. After the general orientation program, including a course for understanding Japan, participants are transferred to each local area to participate in specialized programs. At the end of the program, they come back to Osaka to participate in the evaluation program and a closing ceremony. Ten out of 40 groups participated in the specialized programs that were held in Kansai area excluding Hyogo Prefecture.

From Oceania to Nara

From June 19 to July 11, 2002, young people involved with administration in the social and welfare fields were invited to Japan from 12 countries: Fiji,

Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Specialized programs in Nara Prefecture were held from two aspects—training and exchange—with the cooperation of the Nara International Exchange Center (Kashihara City, Nara Prefecture). At the training programs, participants took lectures at a special nursing home and joined the recreation activities for the residents of the home and learned the current situations surrounding Japanese welfare for the aged. They also heard a lecture regarding the safety management of the security force system at a police station and learned about one of the Japanese social systems. As for exchange, they observed Japanese elementary school life by spending lunchtime and clean-up time with children at an elementary school and experienced home stays with local families.

Exchange with local citizens is one of the popular programs among the participants. At a party after the homestay pro-



Oceanian young people visiting an elementary school in Osaka

gram, a participant performed folk dancing with his host family. Some made interesting remarks comparing Japanese and Oceania, stating “I am too tall for Japanese houses, and I almost broke the furniture.”

We hope such interactive programs inspire both Japanese who accept participants and the invited young people to promote further international cooperation. We also expect that the friendship fostered in this program will last and develop into another interaction in the future.

(Osaka International Centre)