

President's Message



Ogoura Kazuo, President
The Japan Foundation

In the five years since it was granted the status of an independent administrative institution, the Japan Foundation has focused its efforts on carrying out effective projects in line with the spirit of the times.

First of all, the Japan Foundation has enhanced its projects aimed at Japanese-language education overseas. The Japanese-Language Proficiency Test, which is carried out at the same time across the whole world, now has some 530,000 examinees. To date, the test has been held once a year, but starting in 2009 it is to be held twice a year. In addition, the Japan Foundation is aiming to improve the services it offers over the Internet and has set up the Center for Japanese-Language Testing. It has also embarked on the construction of a network linking Japanese-language education centers around the world.

Next, the Japan Foundation has enhanced its system of assistance for Japanese studies overseas. In order to ensure that the limited funds are used effectively, a research institution in each country has been designated as the base for that country, and this becomes the focus for assistance. The Japan Foundation has also worked to build up networks of researchers.

In the fields of arts exchange and intellectual exchange, the Japan Foundation is working to establish the new concept of cultural exchange

for peace building. The Foundation has already undertaken cultural exchange projects that comfort children traumatized by conflict and a project to invite young people from regions that have been affected by conflict to Hiroshima to help them reflect deeply on the meaning of peace. In order to further develop the concept, the Japan Foundation established a joint research center together with Aoyama Gakuin University in April 2008.

The Japan Foundation is thus working proactively to carry out projects that meet the demands of a new age. At the same time, given the harsh situation of the Japanese economy, the Foundation has also made great efforts to economize and to optimize its operations. The relocation of our headquarters is just one example of the Foundation's efforts to economize. The Foundation has also strengthened its flexible fund management policy, thus increasing its income.

In response to the demands of the time, the Japan Foundation has been making efforts to conduct its activities in closer contact with actors in various fields. As part of these efforts, the Japan Foundation is making proactive efforts to provide information by updating its website and establishing an information center (the JFIC) that is open to the public. Collaboration with companies is also important, and the Japan Foundation is bolstering its collaborative actions

with the CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities of Japanese companies that have entered overseas markets.

Finally, lest the Japan Foundation become complacent about the efforts it is making, it is working with specialists and researchers to develop evaluation indices so that its projects can be evaluated by third parties.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have kindly shown their understanding and support for the ideas and actions of the Japan Foundation as it meets the demands of the age while at the same time carrying out reform in line with the spirit of the times. It is also my earnest desire that more and more people will come to understand and support the Japan Foundation. (December 2008)

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This report refers to the fiscal year 2007 (FY2007) that run from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008.

Japanese names follow the practice of surname first.