

## Asia Center

At the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting in Tokyo in December 2013, Japan announced a new Asian cultural exchange policy named, *WA Project—Toward Interactive Asia through Fusion and Harmony*. To handle this project, the Japan Foundation established a new department called the "Asia Center" in April 2014.

In accordance with the four C's for Communicate, Connect & Share, Collaborate, and Create, the Asia Center holds various programs to promote and strengthen cultural exchanges between Japan and Asian countries until 2020, the year of Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.



DANCE DANCE ASIA Bangkok performance

## Two-Way Exchange of Culture

### People-to-People Exchange Program in Asia

We implement and support grassroots and regional group exchanges to expand exchanges between Japan and other Asian countries and promote mutual understanding and friendship between Asian peoples.

#### ■ HANDs! — Hope and Dreams — Project!

This project selects young adult leaders from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, and Japan to participate in group exchanges and training for disaster preparedness education.

Participants visit disaster-affected areas in each country and incorporate the lessons learned into their own disaster education action plan. With Asia prone to so many natural disasters, disaster preparedness is a mutual concern for everyone. From the start, this project has been attracting much interest. While only five participants from each country could be selected for the project, Indonesia attracted 555 applicants and 159 applicants from the Philippines. During the training program, the local press and social media in each country showed much interest in the creative methods of using art, games, etc., in a new style of disaster education. In fiscal 2015, the action plan by the 2014 members will be implemented side by side with new recruits joining the project.

### Promotion and Support for Building Networks in Asia

Our activities to promote training and exchanges among cultural experts in various fields in Asia include the following: 1. Invitation of Asian cultural leaders to Japan, 2. Fellowships for short- and long-term stays in Japan and/or ASEAN countries, and 3. People-to-people exchanges for sending groups overseas and inviting groups to Japan.

In fiscal 2014, we started the Short Term Invitation Program for Cultural Leaders and invited seven people to Japan. The program started with the invitation of the founder of Laos' first commercial television station. Also, to help enhance the joint effort on cooperative projects and build a solid foundation for exchanges in Asia, we established the Asia Center Fellowship Program for specialists in Japan and ASEAN countries to go overseas for research purposes.

### Asian Cultural Collaboration Initiative

This program implements and supports collaborative productions, research, and projects by specialists and institutions involved in Asian arts and culture, sports, and intellectual exchanges. It also supports the introduction to the world of the outcome of the collaborations. By continuing program, we aim to generate new values and movements.

#### ■ Collaboration with Tokyo International Film Festival

In cooperation with the Tokyo International Film Festival, we conducted a variety of exchange activities such as showing Asian films, promoting exchanges among film professionals producing an omnibus film by film directors in Asia and Japan, and awarding the Spirit of Asia Award to the most

promising, upcoming director. We aimed to deepen mutual understanding and promote Asian film talent to the world.

In fiscal 2014, to expand the number of Asian films at the film festival, we created the CROSSCUT ASIA section. This section presents films depicting Asia today and gives more people a chance to see Asian films. We also invited 29 members of the featured film's casts and directors, and 59 film journalists and other film industry people from Asian countries to Japan. We thereby promoted exchanges and networking within the Asian film industry.

In the Asian Future section, "The Spirit of Asia Award by the Japan Foundation Asia Center" was awarded to Sotho Kulikar of Cambodia who directed *The Last Reel*.

#### ■ DANCE DANCE ASIA

We started the *DANCE DANCE ASIA -Crossing the Movements-* project to encourage collaboration and support the exchanges between and among street dance companies and street dancers in Asia.

In fiscal 2014, prominent Japanese street dance companies toured the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand. A total of 5,711 saw their performances and a total of 1,240 attended their workshops. A solid foundation was thereby created for further exchanges.

#### ■ Joint Football Exchange Program with JFA and J.League

This program was started jointly with the Japan Football Association (JFA) and the Japan Professional Football League (J.League) to conduct football exchanges in Asia. With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics approaching, we hope to use the power of sports to share a common ground and solidarity regardless of our different languages and cultures.

In fiscal 2014, to promote mutual understanding and build a solid foundation for future exchanges, we invited the national youth teams of Brunei, the Philippines, and Cambodia and football journalists from ASEAN countries. We also invited youth teams from ASEAN countries to participate in a J.League youth tournament, and held workshops for children and training sessions for coaches in Thailand.

#### ■ Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama (TPAM in Yokohama)

TPAM is a platform for contemporary performing arts specialists to cooperate and share information, learn from each other, and hold discussions and exchanges. In fiscal 2014, the 20th year of TPAM, the Asia Center joined the TPAM Executive Committee to hold programs with a focus on Asia for the first time to expand performing arts exchanges and networking between Japan and Asian countries until 2020.

The Asia Center invited about 50 performing arts experts to TPAM, including stage and festival directors, programmers, and presenters. We also surveyed performing arts festivals and interviewed performers. The new contacts we made at TPAM have led to other things that we have organized.

## "NIHONGO Partners" Program

The "NIHONGO Partners" Program is sending over 3,000 Japanese citizens to schools in ASEAN countries during a seven-year period from 2014 to 2020. They will serve as "Partners" to assist local Japanese-language teachers and students in and outside the classroom and help explain about the Japanese language and culture. The partners will also learn the local language and culture. The program aims to deepen mutual understanding and expand exchanges between Japan and ASEAN countries.

The program's first year in fiscal 2014 started in September when out of 537 applicants, a total of 100 Partners were selected and sent to Thailand (29 Partners), the Philippines (5 Partners), Indonesia (48 Partners), Vietnam (10 Partners), and Malaysia (8 Partners). This first group paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Abe.

The "NIHONGO Partners" represented a diverse group, ranging in age from 20 to 69 with different backgrounds. They worked at their assigned posts using their own teaching methods. Each partner was paired with a local

Japanese-language teacher for team teaching. The partner also shared his or her expertise, special skills, or hobby to teach Japanese culture.

The 100 Partners have taught Japanese to a total of 38,184 students. Many of the local Japanese-language teachers gave comments like, "The students became more motivated to study" and "More students now want to study Japanese." We are also seeing an increase of Japanese-language classes and students as well as Japanese cultural events.

In March 2015, the first group of 29 Partners sent to Thailand and two Partners from the first group in the Philippines completed their terms and returned to Japan. They deepened their understanding of the host country's people and culture and had comments like, "My view of life before and after this job has changed 180 degrees," "Studying the culture in the field of local people was a valuable experience," and "I want to continue friendship with the people I met there."



Class with a NIHONGO Partner



HANDs! Project for disaster education



"The Spirit of Asia Award by the Japan Foundation Asia Center" award ceremony



Football exchange program (Yokohama F.C.)