



The *Satogaeri* Project

Summary

Home. Many JET participants find they make a new one in Japan during their time on the programme as they grow close to their students, colleagues, and neighbours, and become enchanted with the sights and sounds of their placement here. Though JET participants move on, students graduate, and colleagues are transferred to new schools or departments, the memories of everyone's time spent together never fade. To travel back to one's Japanese 'home', years after leaving, and reunite with old friends and reminisce on these halcyon days is every JET participant's dream.

Last November, that dream came true for 12 JET alumni from 11 countries across the various continents in the JET Programme Alumni Satogaeri Project. Initiated to engage the JET alumni community in preparations for this year's 30th Anniversary Celebrations, participants in this Satogaeri Project assembled in Tokyo for a day long 'Global Forum', including an opinion exchange meeting with the AJET national committee before heading back to their Japanese 'hometown' for a three-day adventure.

JET Alumni Global Forum

The JET Alumni Global Forum was held on 10 November 2015 with 16 JET alumni (including the 12 Satogaeri participants), current JET participants represented by 6 members of the AJET National Council, 4 representatives from the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) and Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and 11 executives and staff from CLAIR in attendance. The Global Forum saw all parties related to the JET Programme exchange ideas and opinions about the Programme's future in preparation for the 30th Anniversary, 2019 Rugby World Cup, and 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.



Topics discussed at the Global Forum included cross-chapter and international collaboration between JETAA chapters to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Programme, strengthen the alumni network, and develop new career support initiatives. Revival of JETAA International was also discussed as a key first step in initiating these collaborative efforts and assisting with the creation of new JETAA Chapters.

The JET Declaration

To conclude the Global Forum and initiate consensus building between the various JETAA chapters and AJET in preparation for the 30th Anniversary, the 3 ministries involved with the JET Programme (MIC, MOFA, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology or 'MEXT') and CLAIR proposed the authoring of a 'JET Declaration' to be presented at the 30th Anniversary Ceremony. This JET Declaration will represent the voices of the current and former JET participants at the 30th Anniversary Ceremony. The selection of themes and the actual drafting of the Declaration will be entrusted to the JET alumni (represented by JETAA country representatives) and current JET participants (represented by National AJET), with suggested themes including:

- The bond between JET Participants, Japan, and the local Community
- The increase of supporters of Japan throughout the world
- Alumni advocacy of the JET Programme

- Combined efforts to promote the 2019 Rugby World Cup and 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games

In addition, the *Satogaeri* participants and AJET representatives in attendance advocated including the following themes:

- Building lifetime relationships between people of different nations
- Notion of global citizenship
- Development of global talent
- Importance of the roles played by JET alumni
- Recommitment to improving language instruction
- Mutual respect and understanding/overcoming cultural differences

It is our hope that this JET Declaration will become a statement of the programme's accomplishments as well as a guideline for its future. We ask that all JET alumni become involved in the creation of this Declaration by voicing their opinions to their local JETAA chapters, as well as their country representatives, who will assemble in Tokyo the day before the 30th Anniversary Ceremony to ratify the Declaration.

JET Alumni and AJET Opinion Exchange Meeting



The representatives of the AJET National Council expressed enthusiasm in collaborating with JETAA to build new career support programmes to aid JET participants' transition from JET life to alumni life, and presented on their plans to provide current JET participants with even more opportunities to obtain marketable career skills while on the Programme.

Of course, as this meeting was part of the *Satogaeri* Project, the subject of alumni re-connecting with their former contracting organisations was also discussed at length. With the average number of JET alumni per prefecture reaching over one thousand, and more and more senior alumni becoming leaders in their respective communities and workplaces, there is increasing interest in utilising the network of JET alumni to support the activities of local governments in Japan. While many agreed that local governments could be more active in reaching out to their alumni and requesting their assistance, inviting senior JET alumni to rekindle their connection with the JETAA community and the construction of a database of JET alumni were also proposed as measures to build a stronger and more accessible alumni network.

Satogaeri

Following the JET Alumni Global Forum, the 12 Satogaeri Project participants set out on their own separate adventures all across Japan. Many participants were welcomed by local government leaders, visited the schools and government offices where they worked during their time on JET, and reunited with many of their coworkers and friends through home-visits and gatherings. Some also had the opportunity to step in to the classroom again to relive their JET experience, lead a cooking class or cultural seminar to reconnect with members of the community, and hold town hall meetings with local government representatives to discuss foreign exchange activities and the promotion of tourism.

Throughout their adventures, the participants posted messages, photos, and videos to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to share the fun and excitement of their Japanese 'hometowns' with the whole world. You can relive their adventures by accessing The JET Programme Alumni Satogaeri Project Facebook page, the *jet_satogaeri* Instagram account, or the *JETSatogaeriProject* Twitter feed.

Learn more about the Satogaeri Project in the following two articles and 'Best of Satogaeri' photo feature.



Felicia Lee (Singapore) meets with the Mayor of Oirase Town, Aomori, where she was appointed as an ALT.



Alexander Peterson (United States of America) visiting former students at a school in Miyakonojo City, Miyazaki.