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【01】 New Year' s Reflections

Striving towards wider-area collaborative multilingual support for foreign residents

OFIX Administrative Director, Masane Odaka

Happy New Year!

I would like to thank everyone for your support for OFIX' s programs last year.

As part of our efforts to ensure the safety and security of foreign residents and visitors of Osaka, OFIX provides a multilingual information service on a daily basis. Given the recent occurrences of natural disasters throughout Japan, OFIX has stepped up measures to respond to a large-scale disaster by strengthening our multilingual support for foreign residents.

In the event of a large-scale disaster, together with Osaka Prefectural Government we will establish the Osaka Multilingual Disaster Information Center to provide information from the government to foreign nationals. For this, we have undertaken hands-on training and simulated the establishment and ongoing operations of the Center.

However, we face difficulties in securing the volunteers needed to assist in responding to a large-scale disaster from simply within the prefecture. We therefore intend to continue to strengthen our wide-area collaborations with the Kinki Region Liaison Council of Local Associations for International Relations*1 and the National Liaison Council of Local Associations for International Relations*2,

so that when the time comes, participating organizations can provide or request human resources to or from each other.

In further advancing our multilingual disaster support system, OFIX is also expanding its Easy-Japanese language efforts and promoting its use throughout the prefecture.

As we work towards further developing these programs, OFIX would once again like to ask for your support this year.

- *1 Comprised of local international organizations in the Kinki regional block
- *2 Comprised of local international organizations in the six regional blocks in Japan (Hokkaido/Tohoku, Kanto, Tokai/Hokuriku, Kinki, Chugoku/Shikoku and Kyushu)

【02】 Activity Report

★ FY 2017 Osaka Invitational Program for Short Term Overseas Trainees in Architecture and Arts (Ando Program) ★

The eight trainees mentioned in the last issue completed their one-month training and returned home on October 19. OFIX would like to thank everyone involved in making this year's training such a success.

The trainees had ten days of company training at one of four construction companies in Osaka Prefecture - Obayashi Corporation, The Zenitaka Corporation, Takenaka Corporation and Daiwa House Industry Co., Ltd., where they learned about the Japanese workplace environment, as well as traditional and new architectural techniques. Mr. Tadao Ando, gave the trainees the advice that "an architect should not only limit their scope to architecture, but should also widen their focus and learn about the economy, the arts and the natural environment" .

During their courtesy visit, the young trainees seemed inspired and energized, realizing the importance of thinking for oneself and searching to discover their own answers.

We hope that the trainees utilize the knowledge, experiences and encounters they gained through this training and become bridges that help further bring together Japan and its Asian neighbors.

《Upon finishing the Ando Program》
Zhao Yating (Trainee from China)

Since returning to China, I have been busy at my architectural design office preparing for upcoming exhibitions.

The month I spent in Osaka gave me not only the chance to reexamine myself and my work, but through experiencing Mr. Ando's works first hand,

the opportunity to discover new ideas regarding the use of space and the relationship between architecture and the environment.

I also received valuable information about residential architecture thanks to the workshop at Kindai University and training at Takenaka Corporation, and became more educated about architecture and culture of each of the trainees' countries.

When I recently revisited the Shanghai Poly Grand Theatre designed by Mr. Ando, I found myself with a deeper understanding of his architectural concept and design.

In addition, I have a deeper interest in architects from other cultures, having recently attended an exhibition by Balkrishna Doshi – an Indian architect recommended by Ashlon Frank, my fellow trainee from India.

I hope I can meet everyone I met in Osaka again.

- ★ Wider-Area Disaster Support Simulation Training led by the Hosting Organization of the Kinki Region Liaison Council of Local Associations for International Relations ★

The Kinki Region Liaison Council of Local Associations for International Relations holds network training sessions for organizations involved in disaster support for foreign residents, every year.

OFIX was this year's hosting organization and thus in charge of the training, which was conducted under the mock situation where a far-reaching disaster had occurred and several member organizations of the council had requested assistance at the same time.

Each organization discussed what kind of collaborative support would be effective in their region. Opinions ranged from what kind of efforts local organizations should be doing on a daily basis, to challenges that extend beyond the capabilities of international exchange bodies.

Representative Director of the Resource Center for Multicultural Community Tokai, Mr. Yoshihiko Doi, gave participants the advice: "while it's important to address challenges, it's essential to set a deadline as to when you plan to solve them".

The Liaison Council will continue to work towards improving their disaster support systems for foreign residents.

- ★ Disaster Support for Foreign Residents ★

- The 2nd Osaka Prefectural Network Meeting for Supporting Foreigners in a Disaster

Date: Tuesday, November 28

Participants: 19

As the second meeting of FY 2017 (the first was mentioned in vol. 83), this network meeting aims to allow local governments

and international exchange organizations in Osaka Prefecture to share information and expertise with each other regarding multilingual support for foreign residents in the event of a large-scale disaster.

Under the theme of “Collaboration with Related Organizations regarding Disaster Support for Foreigners” , Yao City, the Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis and Joyo International Exchange Association (Kyoto Prefecture) presented case examples of the kind of joint efforts they have undertaken with other local international exchange organizations, universities and NPOs.

With Joyo International Exchange Association’ s attendance, participants were able to gain insight into programs undertaken by not only areas throughout Osaka, but also the wider Kinki Region.

■ Toyonaka Multilingual Disaster Information Center Training Drill (Co-hosted by OFIX)

Fri Dec 1 (18 participants) and Fri Dec 15 (16 participants)

Together with OFIX, Toyonaka City and the Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis (ATOMS) held the Toyonaka Multilingual Disaster Information Center Training Drill for the first time over two days.

During the training drill, Toyonaka city and ATOMS staff created original Japanese texts for multilingual translation and took part in a simulated patrol of a disaster shelter. Through reevaluating the Center’ s operations and its manual handbook, participants were able to uncover its existing challenges including the Center’ s proposed location, shelter patrol methods and so on.

Mr. Takagi, Vice President of the NPO National Managerial Council for Multicultural Information & Assistance, led the training and gave valuable advice regarding the best measures to grasp the situation of foreigners affected by a disaster.

■ FY 2017 Training for Disaster-Related Volunteer Interpreters and Translators

Date: Wednesday, December 6

Participants: 12

For this training, we held the workshop “Experience Language Barriers” where participants attempted to guess the content of a document written in a foreign language based on limited information such as numbers. Through this workshop, participants were able to experience the same kind of difficulties some foreigners feel when trying to understand important information in Japanese, as well as the importance of providing information in an easy to understand manner.

★ Networking with Related Organizations ★

■ Ritsumeikan University' s International Exchange Festival “Asia Week”

Date: Sunday, October 22

Venue: Osaka Ibaraki Campus (OIC), Ritsumeikan University

OFIX set up a booth during Ritsumeikan University' s international exchange festival, “Asia Week” under the theme of “connecting with the community: learning how you get support and how you can support others” . Using informative panels and fliers, staff spoke to visiting students and others about OFIX' s volunteer system and cross-cultural awareness education foreign supporter programs, and a consultation service was available in English and Japanese for international students.

■ The 20th International Friendship Festival

Date: Thursday November 23 (National Holiday)

Venue: The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai

This annual event is held by the Support Council for Participants of Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai* to provide students of the institute and local residents a place to come together. In addition to students setting up booths to introduce their countries, OFIX organized their own booth where their Coordinator for International Relations introduced his country Australia with the help of flags and pictures. Mock cross-cultural awareness education lessons were also given to participants, which made the event feel refreshingly different.

* Comprised of OFIX and 10 international Exchange organizations in and south of Kishiwada city

★ International Student Support ★

at Orion International House (Osaka Prefectural Sakai International Hall)

■ Orion International House Evacuation Drill

Date: Saturday November 18

Participants: 38 Orion residents and others

Every year, students from Orion House and nearby Osaka City University International Residence conduct an evacuation drill together.

After an evacuation drill due to a simulated fire outbreak inside the Orion House kitchen, an official from Sakai City Kita Fire Station demonstrated to students how to use a fire extinguisher.

Then, despite the rain, participants walked to Nishimozu Elementary School,

their designated emergency evacuation area,
for about 15 minutes to familiarize themselves with the route.

Additionally, students learned about how to respond
to an earthquake and important points for a safe evacuation,
instilling in them the importance of disaster preparedness.

■ Local Exchange Event (Winter Party)

Date: Saturday, December 9

Participants: 55 Orion residents, local residents and others

A local exchange event is held twice a year for Orion
and local community residents to help them foster friendships
with each other.

This report is written by one of the Orion tutors
who planned and ran the event.

《Yuhi Koegaitsu (Japan)》

At the party, Orion and local community residents overcame nationality
and cultural differences to bond via fun activities
such as Rakugo performances in Japanese, English and Chinese,
self-introductions and Bingo games. Through this event,
I hope participants will be able greet and chat to each other
when walking around the neighborhood or at the supermarket,
and that it becomes a great memory of their life
at Orion House and in Japan.

【03】 Disaster Preparation Workshop for International Student Coordinators Lecture: International Student Support Activities during the Kumamoto Earthquake

A disaster preparation workshop *1 for international student
coordinators from higher education institutions was held
on Friday, October 20 last year.

Assistant Professor Shinnosuke Takahashi from the Faculty
of Global Human Sciences at Kobe University gave a lecture about
“International Student Support Activities during the Kumamoto Earthquake” ,
talking about his experiences assisting foreign students
during the Kumamoto Earthquake efforts in April 2016
as a teacher at Kumamoto University.

*1 The workshop was co-hosted by Osaka Prefectural Government,
Dai-yu-kyo Foundation of International Exchange,
Assistance & Research*2 and CARES-Osaka*3

*2 Dai-yu-kyo Foundation of International Exchange,
Assistance & Research Website:
<http://www.daiyukyo-kokusaikoryu.or.jp/>

*3 CARES-Osaka Website: <http://www.kansai-u.ac.jp/CARES-Osaka/>

● International Student Support Activities during the Kumamoto Earthquake
Shinnosuke Takahashi,
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Global Human Sciences, Kobe University

1. Evacuation Shelters and International Students

- The need for effective provision of public information -

Following the earthquake disaster, two of Kumamoto University's three campuses - Kurokami and Oe - were made into evacuation shelters.

Many of the university's international students could not understand Japanese, so information was mostly acquired from person-to-person or via social media. A disaster manual was available on the university's website, but students were not made aware of the document.

It is vital that public information is sent out by universities and governments to international students during an earthquake disaster, but on closer inspection, we must think about how students can access this information. One of the major challenges at the time and going forward is how to best provide official information in an effective manner.

2. Safety Confirmation

- Who is responsible for checking the safety of foreign students? -

Immediately following the earthquake, there was no unit in charge of confirming the safety of individuals, which meant that it was conducted individually, person by person.

Using the project team I was a part of at the University's graduate school as an example, specially appointed professors including myself provided mental support for students on a regular basis.

When the earthquake occurred, however, not all of these professors could assist students like before.

Instead, there were some mentors who worked independently with student leaders individually to confirm the safety of individuals.

Here we were faced with the dilemma: "whose role is it to confirm the safety of individuals in an evacuation shelter?"

3. Roles of University Staff

- The reality of running an evacuation shelter -

The university's evacuation shelters were operated voluntarily by teaching staff and students including international students. While it is ideal for all teaching staff to come together and operate the evacuation center, the reality is that some are likely to become affected by the disaster and unable to do so.

Also, it is essential for volunteers to be able to organize themselves and know to what degree and in what ways they can provide assistance.

In our case, teaching staff and students came together to effectively oversee the evacuation area, coordinating the roles of volunteers and the sharing of information.

4. Activities of International Student Volunteers

- International Students connecting those affected to support staff -

As time passes on from the opening of the shelter, foreign residents, including international students affected by the disaster, gradually become actively involved in support efforts. For example, activities such as yoga classes and radio gymnastic exercises presented opportunities to interact with one another.

In utilizing this, we asked international student volunteers to provide information on fellow students whose safety had not been confirmed, those who were from the same country, and friends from different countries.

The care shown between students was shown to be the most effective method. In these ways, we realized how invaluable it was to have Japanese-speaking international students able to work positively and voluntarily as “agents” between support staff and affected parties.

It is important to build and strengthen connections with these individuals on a regular basis.

5. Collaborating with Other Organizations

- Challenge for evacuation shelters: coordinating efforts with external support teams -

In Kumamoto’s case, immediately following the disaster we had Japan’s Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), medical professionals and assistance from other municipalities around the country come to assist us. While grateful to receive outside support, in some cases it was a source of stress for those at the shelter, as medical officials might ask the same questions over and over at the same shelters, as well as the presence of visiting media outlets.

For these reasons, the coordination of outside support, the media and volunteers is crucial for an evacuation shelter to function effectively, and our challenge is to improve these systems going forward.

Conclusion - Towards Recovery -

There is no actual end to recovery. The need to gradually “restore” people’s lives increases as time passes following the earthquake disaster. It is near impossible, however, to restore people’s lives completely back to the state before the disaster.

Of course the loss of possessions due to the disaster can hurt, but the physical and psychological damage suffered by people over time and at various stages needs to be addressed with care.

In order for those affected by the disaster and support staff like us to be accepting and cooperative with one another,

the process towards restoration is a chance to rebuild the relationship between both sides.

I believe that the reconstruction process should be less about “restoring” something, and more about “building and creating something new” .

[04] One-Day Consultation Services for Foreign Residents

《Co-hosted by OFIX》 ※Free and confidential

- ◆OFIX held one day consultation events with municipalities. Specialists such as lawyers, administrative scriveners and social security consultants were on hand to respond to consultations of visitors, and OFIX volunteers were available to provide interpreting support.

Visitors included foreign residents in the community and students studying at nearby Japanese language schools.

- Takaishi City Thursday, October 19 Takaishi City Hall
- Sakai City Tuesday, October 31 Sakai International Plaza
- Shijonawate City Friday, November 10 Shijonawate Shimin Sogo Center
- Fujiidera City Wednesday, November 22 Fujiidera City Citizens hall

- ◆One day consultation events will be held as follows:

(1) Co-hosted by Daito City and OFIX:

One Day Consultation for Foreign Residents

Date and Time: Sunday, March 11 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Venue: Daito City Lifelong Learning Center, “Across”

(2) Co-hosted by Hannan City and OFIX - Free Consultation for Foreign Residents

Date and Time: Monday, March 19 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Venue: 2nd Floor, Annex Building, Hannan City Hall

- * Available Consultations: (1) residence status, National Health Insurance, National Pension, taxes, working conditions, labor, daily life
- (2) residence status, law, daily life and so on
- * Interpreters available in English, Chinese and Vietnamese for (1). For (2), languages available for (1) plus Korean and Spanish

Notice

- Seeking Banner Ads for the English OFIX homepage!

OFIX has redesigned its English homepage and is introducing banner ads. Banners can be placed for a discounted price until March 2018 as part of our special introductory offer.

Please visit: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/>

- Sakai International Hall - Orion International House:

Tenants wanted from Spring!

OFIX' s Sakai International Hall - Orion International House
is looking for tenants to reside in the dormitory from April.
20 male rooms and 23 female rooms available

For further details:

<http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/accept/support/orion.html>

● OFIX Booth at the 25th One World Festival!

The One World Festival will take place again this year
under the theme of “what we can each do to live in the world together” .

During the festival, OFIX will set up a booth at the Kitakumin Center.

Date and Time: Saturday, February 3 and Sunday, February 4
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Locations: Kitakumin Center, Ogimachi Park
and Kansai Television Ogimachi Square,

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【Osaka Information Service for Foreign Residents】 (Within OFIX)
Free Consultation Service for Foreigners
(Consultations about Status of Residence, Employment and Labor,
Medical and Welfare and Living)

Consultation Hours 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (Monday to Friday)
※except for national holidays
Lunchtime (12:15 p.m. - 1 p.m.)

Designated Line 06-6941-2297

Available Languages English, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish,
Vietnamese, Filipino, Thai and Japanese

E-mail jouhou-c@ofix.or.jp ※Japanese/English only

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≫≫ Looking for Banner Ads for OFIX' s Website!
Japanese page: 10,000 yen per frame per month
<http://www.ofix.or.jp/banner.html>
English page: 5,000 yen per frame per month
<http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/banner.html>

≫≫ Want to become a supporting member of OFIX?
Corporate Member: Annual fee of 100,000 yen
Individual Member: Annual fee of 3,000 yen
⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/ofix/support/index.html>

≫≫ Towards the 2025 World Expo In Osaka-Kansai

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★OFIX announcements★

※International Understanding Education Program dispatching foreign

volunteers to Elementary, Junior High and High schools.

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/training/education/dispatch.html>

※Introducing OFIX's volunteer system

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/accept/volunteer/system.html>

※Request for Donations

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/ofix/donation.html>

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»» Comments and suggestions for OFIX News

⇒ E-mail info@ofix.or.jp

»» To cancel your registration or change your registered email address

⇒ http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/info/mail/register_j.html

»» Print-out version (PDF) of OFIX News with photos

⇒ http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/info/mail/backnumber/pdf/mail_english_no85.pdf

»» Back Numbers

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/info/mail/backnumber.html>

● The next edition (86th edition) will be available on April 15th 2018(scheduled).

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