

# Indonesian, Filipino and Vietnamese

ARE THE SUPPORTERS OF JAPAN'S AGING POPULATION

**VEENA YOSHINO**



Indonesian and Filipino trainees attend a lecture

**E**VER since the start of the dialogue of exchange between Japan and the 10 Southeast Asian countries that make up ASEAN, the two entities have been strengthening their relationship for the peace and prosperity of Asia. Japan and ASEAN countries are also business partners; especially in the past five years. In fields such as medical facilities and care centers in Japan, ASEAN's bright population is helping to support.

Based on the economic partnership agreement, the intake of foreign nurses and caregivers began with the purpose for them to work and research at nursing homes and medical facilities while also obtaining the national nursing qualification or the national caregiving qualification in order to become certified and continue their work in Japan.

Currently, Japan is taking in nurses and caregivers from Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Indonesians were the first to

arrive in Japan out of the three nations in August 2008 with 104 nurses and 104 caregivers. Actual work for this group started in February of the following year. Intake from the Philippines started in 2009, and the initial numbers were 93 nurses and 190 caregivers. Vietnamese candidates are due to arrive next year.

## TRAINING AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

When the intake first started in 2008, a Japanese language education program specifically for foreign employees did not exist. However, there were many requests for the provision of language courses from medical facilities and nursing homes. Thus the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare launched a learning support program. This involves providing grants for Japanese language courses and other necessary training programs. Moreover, a group training program that will take place four times a year is in the works. This would mean that candidates will be able to receive Japanese lectures from experts of the national examinations. As for caregivers, with kanji learning and national examination study as a focus, they are able to take practice tests and group training. These programs began in 2010.

A representative of the intake coordination agency JICWELS (Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services) states that "Indonesian and Filipinos are extremely kindhearted toward their patients, and they have a lot of respect for the elderly. Where Japanese tend to forget about certain gestures, Indonesians and Filipinos do not fail in doing so. For example, a seemingly small action such as being on eye level with their patients when speaking to them. At the facility, when Japanese staff



Yamaguchi rehabilitation staff picking apples



Welcome ceremony for Filipino nurses



Ms. Garnica Jean Cristie Lincuna from Philippines

witness these scenes, they are reminded of the basics.”

Since 2008, Yamaguchi Rehabilitation Hospital in Yamaguchi City has been taking in foreign nurses and caregivers. On her new life in Japan, Filipino nurse Garnica Jean Cristie Lincuna said “patients and staff here are very kind, and the environment is really great. I’m now able to take the bus on my own, so I’m enjoying shopping on weekends.” Another Filipino nurse, Seguerra Joyce Anne Castillo, says, “The little expressions of Japanese language are very complex, and at times it is difficult to read what the patients are conveying. Still, I

am enjoying my work here.” At this particular hospital, welcome ceremonies are held for new trainees, and there is active interaction between Japanese and foreign staff. For example, they take part in local festivals, apple picking and fishing together. Through these interactive events, nurses are able to learn from the Japanese staff as well as feel happy and find worth in their job. ㊦



Yamaguchi rehabilitation staff at local festival

## >> TOPIC

## CABINET OFFICE ‘SHIP FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN YOUTH’ PROJECT

One youth international exchange project among those conducted by the Cabinet Office is ‘Ship for Southeast Asian Youth.’ Exchange between Japanese youth and that of Southeast Asian countries is furthered on board the ship by this multinational project, where by living together, participants are involved in many types of exchange activities.

The ‘Ship for Southeast Asian Youth’ is founded on a joint declaration by Japan and all ASEAN countries. Beginning in 1974, the project will welcome its 40th time round this year. In 2013, approximately 40 youths from Japan, and 280 youths from 10 ASEAN countries, will take part in exchange activities in Japan for 10 days, followed by a visit to four ASEAN countries over a period of 41 days. On board the ship, the standard language is English. Although discussion regarding understanding foreign cultures, the environment and education form the main program, participants also give presentations on the situation of their own

countries, and participate in cultural exchange and sporting activities. In the countries visited, participants pay a courtesy visit to heads of state and are involved in exchange with the youth of that country, home stays and visits to all types of institutions.

After leaving the ship, youths who participated in the project join post-project organizations in each country, where they make use of the experience gained to give back to society through regional communities as well as occupation. They also contribute to the promotion of international understanding and cooperation. They also make use of the valuable experience they gained while on the ‘Ship for Southeast Asian Youth’ project. Furthermore, in Japan, lively post-project activities are available. Japanese participants join the International Youth Exchange Organization (IYEO), where they are able to exchange information with former participants and take part in network building. ㊦