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Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan

TRAINEE REPORT

The 23rd Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan 2023~2024

23rd year October 2023 - July 2024

あいのわ
ダスキン愛の輪基金

Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan

In 1999, the halfway mark of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Duskin AINOWA foundation launched its Leadership Training Program in Japan. This program invites young people with disabilities to Japan to learn about disability welfare as well as Japanese culture for 10 months. After completing the training program, the participants are expected to become active leaders for people(persons) with disabilities in their countries.

By 2023, a total of 147 people from 29 countries and regions had studied in Japan, and, upon their return, taken part in various activities as leaders in the field of disability welfare in their home countries.

This is a compilation of reports of the 23rd-year trainees. In this report, three trainees wrote about what they learned and how they felt throughout their experiences, including learning Japanese language/sign language lessons, individual training programs designed to meet their specific goals in various institutions, unforgettable New Year homestays with volunteer families, and learning how to ski. We hope you will enjoy reading their stories.

The Duskin AINOWA Foundation extends sincere appreciation to all members of the Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities for taking charge of this training, to all the institutions and organizations that kindly provided training opportunities, and to the AINOWA members. We look forward to your continued support for the Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan.

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Executive Committee for the Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan

Naoko Ibaraki	Professor, Department of Social Work, Meiji Gakuin University
Syunji Kadota	President, Non-profit organization Mainstream Association
Kiyoshi Kawaguchi	Director, Sign Language Studies Japan
Hiroshi Kawamura	Vice Chairman, NPO Assistive Technology Development Organization
Yasunori Shimamoto	Director, Japanese Federation of the Deaf
Akira Terashima	Vice Chairman, Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (JSRPD)
Misako Nomura	Chief of The Secretariat, NPO Assistive Technology Development Organization
Kazuhiko Yamaguchi	Auditor, National Commitee of Welfare for The Blind in Japan

(Terms of members: Apr. 1, 2023 to Mar. 31, 2025)

Training Schedule

Sep. 19 to Oct. 13, 2023	Language training online
Oct. 22 and 23, 2023	Arriving Japan
Oct. 24, 2023	Opening ceremony
Oct. 26 to Nov. 1, 2023	Orientation
Oct. 26, 2023 to Jan. 25, 2024	Japanese & Sign Language training
Dec. 28, 2023 to Jan. 4, 2024	Homestay
Jan. 26 to 29, 2024	Ski training
Jan. 31 to Mar. 1, 2024	Group training 1
Mar. 4 to May 31, 2024	Individual training
June 3 to 28, 2024	Group training 2
July 2 to 10, 2024	Follow-up training
July 6, 2024	Presentation of training achievements
July 12, 2024	Commencement ceremony
July 12 and 13, 2024	Leaving Japan

Rieka Aprilia Hermansyah

Be a Good Leader, and I Want to Share My Realization

Bekasi, Indonesia, 32 years old
Hearing impairment

Fields of interest

1. How Deaf People Develop Their Identity
2. Ideas and Methods for the Development of Deaf Education
3. Japanese Technology

Arrival in Japan

Before the training, I had no knowledge of the Duskin Leadership Training Program. It was my senior, Galuh Sukmara, an alumnus of the 2nd Duskin Leadership Training Program, who suggested that I apply for the program in 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic struck that same year, and World Health Organization (WHO)'s banned on international flights caused a delay in the delegate recruitment process. The recruitment process resumed in 2023, and I successfully met the requirements, passing both the selection test and interview. Finally, I was able to travel abroad for the first time. I flew from Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to Osaka, Japan, with a transit in Singapore. I arrived at Kansai Airport on October 23, 2023.

After just one day in Japan, I noticed many differences between Japan and Indonesia. For instance, the greeting style: Indonesians either press their palms together or place their right hand on their left chest, whereas the Japanese bow. Indonesia has two seasons, the dry season and the rainy season, while Japan has four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. Another remarkable experience for me was witnessing Japan's cleanliness, orderliness, and inclusivity. People with various disabilities were moving around independently. Even in crowded public places, I saw people queueing up. The cleanliness of toilets in Japan is extraordinary. Incredible! I have also visited several tourist spots with different educational themes. It's been amazing! I am from Indonesia, and other trainees were from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. There were a female participant from Sri Lanka with a visual impairment (Stargardt's Macular Dystrophy), and a male participant from Bangladesh with a physical disability (Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease).

Japanese Language and Japanese Sign Language

Before arriving in Japan, I studied writing Hiragana, Katakana, and also JSL (Japanese Sign Language) through eight Zoom meetings. After that, I learned Japanese and JSL directly for three months with both Japanese teachers and Deaf teachers. The lessons continued to focus on writing Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. I found it somewhat difficult to remember Japanese grammar. However, Deaf teachers consistently introduced new sign language vocabulary and encouraged me to practice reading and writing longer sentences in Japanese. The Japanese language and JSL classes helped me interact more easily and quickly with the local community. My JSL skills are better than my Japanese language skills, but I will continue to learn both.

Homestay

In Saga Prefecture, the southernmost part of Kyushu, I stayed at the home of a Japanese family for a week. The New Year celebration at the Inoue family's home was truly enjoyable, with guests Hiroshi-san and Miyabi-san who were also guests like me. I loved the rural Japanese countryside atmosphere because it soothes the heart and the mind, and I could breathe in the natural air. We shared many stories about student exchanges and began to feel like family to one another. Inoue-san works as a fisherman and usually returns home with raw fish which are then cooked at home. During my stay, I had a chance to taste whale meat caught by Inoue-san. It was my first experience eating boiled whale meat. Indonesia also has whales, but they are a protected species and catching and

eating them is prohibited.

My Experience

1. Duskin Museum
At the Duskin Museum, I had the opportunity to cut, mold, and observe the entire process of making donuts from start to finish, including frying them. The donuts came in various shapes and flavors with chocolate or vanilla toppings, which could be customized to taste. I underwent training alongside other participants and the JSRPD team (Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities). It was incredibly enjoyable and exciting!

2. Skiing Class
For the first time, I tried skiing in Niigata for two days, accompanied by skiing instructors, fellow trainees, and the JSRPD team. It was so much fun!! It was also my first time touching snow, which felt like shaved ice.

Individual Training

JASS (Japanese ASL Signers Society), Tokyo
My training was on presentation skills from start to finish, learning about databases, how to stand when one gives a presentation, how to give sign language presentations in front of an audience, and more. It taught me how deaf people can give presentations in ways that are different from hearing people. This helped me improve my presentation abilities.

Deaf Network Kagoshima
Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA runs four businesses. One is Deaf Kids. After classes at deaf schools, children come to Deaf Kids to do homework, play together, and enjoy chatting. The staff communicate with the children in sign language so children are able to understand everything they say. The second business was Budo-no-Ki, a place where elderly deaf people, as well as those who were deaf and had other disabilities, made handicrafts. Budo-no-Ki functioned not only as a place for work, but also as a place where the members could enjoy talking to one another in sign language. The third business was Satsuma Waffle. Again, deaf people, and deaf people also with other disabilities were at work, communicating in sign language. They were being paid and living ordinarily. This made me realize how important it is that there are places for deaf people to work with a sense of security. I tried my hand at making waffles myself, they were exceptionally good. The fourth business is a group home. The buildings were separate for men and women, with deafblind residents. The residents had left home from their parents to become independent and were gradually learning to do more things on their own such as cleaning and doing laundry, step by step. It was especially worth noting that all the leaders of Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA's wide-ranging businesses were all deaf.

Osaka Prefecture Welfare Information and Communication Center
This organization has a structure where Deaf and hearing leaders collaborate effectively.

Comekko
Comekko is a place where deaf infants and young children can learn sign language through fun activities. I found it particularly interesting that Comekko was supporting not just deaf children but their parents too. For instance, they were providing sign language classes to parents to help them communicate with their children at home. They also offer consultations for parents to address their concerns that arise as they raise deaf children.

Meisei Gakuen, Tokyo
I knew about bilingual-education Meisei Gakuen even before coming to Japan. My training at Meisei Gakuen was mostly with its preschool (4-5 years olds) division. I was astonished to see how the children were competent in sign language and able to talk about various subjects. There were these preschool children to junior high school students at Meisei Gakuen, who were interacting with one another regardless of age or faculty which I found was very appealing.

The goal of my training was to learn how deaf children were being instructed in Japan and how parents with deaf children were managing. There were two things I noticed that were different between Indonesia and Japan.
First, the availability of places where children could learn in sign language.

Indonesia does not have schools where deaf children can learn in sign language. In Japan, deaf teachers teach such children in sign language. The children were watching the teachers explaining and asking questions. The advantage of providing education in this interactive manner is that lessons can move forward with teachers checking whether children are understanding what they are being taught. In Indonesia, teachers are teaching without realizing that children are not really following.
The second difference is the availability of consultations and support. Japan has places for parents to consult how to raise deaf children, when their children turn out to be deaf. Through such consultations, parents realize that they can communicate with their children in sign language and are also able to access places to learn sign language. Indonesia does not offer such consultations or support. There are many children in Indonesia who become stay-at-home recluses because they are unable to communicate with their family members and bottle up their feelings.

Future Plans

My future plan is to create a program where parents and Deaf children can have a place for consultations. Additionally, I aim to continue building schools or learning centers for the Deaf. This idea emerged when I saw how many Deaf children of various ages at Meisei Gakuen could easily communicate with other Deaf individuals, whether they were older or peers. I believe that raising awareness about using sign language and communicating with Deaf children across Indonesia is crucial because it contributes to early education. It is especially important for parents of Deaf children to learn and communicate using sign language for daily communication.
Additionally, I will do my best to help people with disabilities find solutions to their challenges. Bismillah.

Individual Training Schedule

Mar. to May 2024	
Mar. 4 to 18	NPO Japanese ASL Signers Society
Mar. 21 to Apr. 16	Non profit Organization Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA
Apr. 19	Approved Specified Nonprofit Corporation Japanese Organization of Broadcast and Commucications for People with Disability
Apr. 19 to May 16	Osaka Association of the Deaf
May 8, 10, 14 17 and 18	Specified NPO: Sign Language Acquisition Research Institute NPO Comekko
May 20 to 30	Meisei Gakuen

Conclusion

Throughout my participation in various activities of the Duskin program, I experienced many enlightening moments, both in group and individual training sessions. During my time in Japan, I gained numerous new experiences, knowledge, and insights. I feel inspired by the wealth of knowledge I have acquired and hope to share this inspiration with others, aspiring to become the best leader I can be. The positive motivation and support I received from many Japanese individuals, especially from Duskin, have fueled my enthusiasm.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Duskin Ainowa Foundation and JSRPD for providing me with such invaluable opportunities during my training in Japan. I hope to maintain and strengthen these bonds of friendship and collaboration formed during both group and individual training experiences.

Message to Trainee

Enrich Your Homeland with Your Empowerment

I first met Rieka online during a Japanese sign language lesson before she arrived in Japan. She wanted to be able to give a brief introduction of herself in Japanese. To my amazement, she was quick to learn Japanese sign language and was soon using it to talk with others. She was so good at learning and communicating and learned so quickly, and so we engaged in many deep conversations. For three months after she arrived in Japan I took her to many places. Whenever she saw something that she wanted to take home to Indonesia, she would instantly take videos and post them on social media. She was also enjoying Japan's seasons and culture. Many people – her host family, people from her training destinations, and sign language interpreters, all praised her saying she was so good at Japanese sign language and how they could not believe she mastered it in such a short time. In the final presentation on reporting on training results in July, and when I met her again at the farewell reception, she would instantly ask me if she saw any Japanese signs she had never seen before. She was driven and hard-working to the end, it was so impressive. Rieka, make your dream come true in your homeland, of wanting to give deaf people and hard-of-hearing infants and young children an environment to learn sign language. I am cheering for your future.

Tomomi Oshima
Japanese sign language instructor

Message to Trainee

Before Rieka arrived in Japan, I had been teaching her Japanese sign language online. It was apparent from the first lesson that she was a quick learner and had a flair for languages, not just for Japanese but also for Japanese sign language.
Later she was to receive training primarily at Deaf Kids, NPO Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA's after-school daycare service. She had great communication skills and was so lively as she interacted actively with the children. During outdoor activities, she played together with children despite being in the Ramadan period. She also told children stories about Indonesia. Her ability to capture everyone's attention was amazing.
Also, at "Budo no Ki," a type-B support office for continuous employment, she worked with deaf people and people who were not just deaf but also had other disabilities. At Satsuma Waffle she tried her hand at making baked items. At a group home she cooked everyone Indonesia's halal food. It was a good experience not only for her but for the staff and users of these facilities.
Rieka, I am certain that after you go home, you will be working to help deaf children's further development, utilizing the experience and knowledge you gained in Japan. You may face various hardships such as in funding, but you will push ahead with your positive mindset. I am cheering for you all the way from Kagoshima.

Rie Sawada
Chief Director
Non profit Organization Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA

Empowering Visionaries: Transforming Disability Inclusion and Access in Sri Lanka

Malabe, Sri Lanka, 29years old
Visual impairment (Low Vision)

Fields of interest

1 Tourism for People with Disabilities
2 About Special Needs Education

I am Harshani Kaushalya from Sri Lanka. I have low vision, but I firmly believe that I still have useful vision, which drives my desire to help others as much as I can. Two years ago, I graduated from the University of Colombo. Fueled by my conviction and a passion for making a difference, I came to Japan on the 23rd of October to participate in the 23rd Duskin Leadership Training program. This opportunity is not only significant for me personally but also holds great promise for my country. Through this training, I have been able to learn a multitude of valuable skills and insights that I am eager to share and implement back home.

During the program, I attended a three-month Japanese language class, which laid a crucial foundation for my journey. Understanding the Japanese language is important to me because I aspire to establish a foundation that distributes Japanese Braille language among school students with vision impairments in Sri Lanka. These students are eager to learn Japanese, but the lack of interpreters to translate Japanese Braille into Japanese has been a barrier, preventing them from studying Japanese as a subject.
As a Duskin trainee, I had the opportunity to enhance my Japanese language skills and learn Braille. These skills were instrumental in my success during the individual training sessions. My improved proficiency in Japanese enabled me to communicate effectively and engage deeply with the training material. Learning Braille was particularly empowering, as it opened up new avenues for accessing information and resources.
During the Duskin training program, I and other trainees also received training in wheelchair assistance and assisting the visually impaired. This

training was crucial in helping us support each other during the sessions, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment. By learning proper techniques and gaining hands-on experience, we were able to navigate more effectively and assist fellow trainees, enhancing the overall training experience for everyone involved. This training helped us recognize that what one person might struggle with alone, we could achieve together through mutual support and cooperation.
The Duskin training program, particularly in Group Training Part 1 and 2, significantly enhanced my development as a trainee and leader. It improved my leadership skills, teaching me effective communication, motivation, and guidance techniques essential for creating an inclusive environment. The program raised my awareness about disability issues and taught me how to promote inclusive practices, fostering a more supportive and accessible community. Training activities boosted my self-confidence and personal growth, while self-reflection emphasized the importance of evaluating progress and celebrating achievements.
I developed a clear vision for the future, setting goals and actionable plans for sustained progress. Learning about disability policies in other developed countries, including Japan, broadened my perspective and provided valuable advocacy lessons. These experiences empowered me to lead and inspire others effectively.
In addition to leadership training, the program enhanced my project proposal writing skills, enabling me to craft compelling proposals, articulate goals clearly, and plan budgets effectively. This allows me to secure funding for initiatives aimed at improving services for individuals with disabilities in Sri Lanka.
My presentation skills improved, helping me advocate for disabled individuals by presenting compelling cases to stakeholders and the community.
Networking skills enabled me to build professional relationships, leverage networks for collaboration, and connect with experts and organizations for support. These experiences and skills have shaped me into a more effective leader for Sri Lanka, equipped to advocate for disability inclusion, design impactful projects, and foster a more inclusive society.
Individual training sessions were instrumental in preparing me to become an instructor for university students with disabilities, a role that will significantly benefit Sri Lanka. By visiting universities in Osaka and Kyoto, such as Kyoto University, Ritsumeikan University, Bukkyo University, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, and Doshisha University, I observed support systems and services for students with

disabilities. These experiences highlighted the importance of creating inclusive environments and inspired me to implement similar practices in Sri Lankan universities, ultimately improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities.
Visits to specialized institutions like the Japan Braille Library, Kyoto Lighthouse, Osaka Lighthouse, Human Care Center, and Kyoto Center for Hearing Impaired provided insights into creating accessible workplaces and offering valuable resources for individuals with various disabilities. This knowledge is crucial for developing comprehensive support systems in Sri Lanka that address the needs of people with visual, hearing, and physical impairments.
Learning about DAISY accessible book production equipped me with the skills to produce alternative formats of textbooks and readings, ensuring all students have equal access to course materials. This capability will significantly enhance the learning experience for students with print disabilities in Sri Lanka, promoting independent learning and self-reliance.
Completing a peer counseling course at the Human Care Center in Harajuku further enhanced my ability to provide emotional and practical support to students with disabilities, fostering a supportive learning environment. In conclusion, my journey through the Duskin Leadership Training program has been nothing short of transformative. Equipped with enhanced leadership skills and a deepened understanding of disability inclusion.
During my time in Japan as part of the Duskin Leadership Training program, I had the invaluable opportunity to explore two significant areas of focus: para sports and accessible environments for people with disabilities. Para sports not only promote inclusivity by highlighting the abilities of athletes with disabilities but also play a crucial role in raising awareness and reducing stigma surrounding disability. By encouraging participation in physical activities, para sports contribute to improved health and well-being among individuals with disabilities while fostering a sense of community among athletes, families, and supporters. Moreover, these sports open doors to enhanced opportunities, including increased funding, development, and participation in international competitions.
Additionally, my visits to various accessible places and companies in Japan underscored the importance of creating inclusive environments. These experiences have equipped me with insights and strategies that are crucial for promoting accessible tourism in Sri Lanka, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in and enjoy the country's attractions. Together, these endeavours aim to create a more inclusive society where all individuals, regardless of ability, can thrive and contribute meaningfully.

Individual Training Schedule

Mar. to June 2024	
Mar. 4 to 18	Assistive Technology Development Organization
Mar. 21 to Apr. 3	Hamamatsu WorkShop with The Disabled -WITH-
Apr. 9 and 10	Japan Braille Library
Apr. 11 and 12	AAR Japan
Apr. 15 to May 2 *Excluding Apr. 18 and 20 May 13 to 17	NPO Uni
Apr. 18 and 20 May 7 to 10	Nippon Lighthouse Welfare Center for The Blind
May 21 to June 1	Human Care Association

Conclusion

I am eager to share the benefits of Japanese language learning with Sri Lanka's vision-impaired community. My goal is to establish a foundation that promotes Japanese language and Braille education, leveraging my newfound expertise to create tangible, positive change. The program has not only broadened my perspective on disability policies and inclusive practices but has also equipped me with practical skills in accessible book production and peer counselling. Armed with these capabilities, I am committed to fostering an environment of mutual assistance and empowerment back home.
By advocating for disability rights and promoting educational inclusivity, I aim to forge a more accessible and supportive environment for all individuals in Sri Lanka. My experiences with the Duskin program have laid a solid foundation for this endeavour, empowering me to lead initiatives that will have a lasting impact on my community and beyond.

Message to Trainee

It Is Your Smile Harshani, That Connects the World of the Seeing and the World of the Visually Impaired

To be honest when I first saw Harshani's training goals, I was not sure what kind of training we could provide because the themes were so wide-ranging. I carried this concern into April of this year when Harshani came to Kansai for her training. The issue was not resolved; NPO Uni provided extensive training mostly on support for students with disabilities, but the training we provided became somewhat scattershot. However, I was completely taken by surprise by Harshani's final presentation on the training results! Harshani, you said that the training in Japan helped narrow down your goals, and as well as reporting on the training, you announced with your own words, in excellent Japanese, your determination to (1) want to become an instructor for university students with disabilities, and (2) want to contribute to the betterment of welfare for visually impaired people in Sri Lanka, by creating and providing materials such as Braille and recorded books. You have an intractable and progressive eye disease. You told me that people at normal schools did not understand what "hard to see" meant and that it was only after graduating that your world completely changed as you began receiving support for visual impairment for the first time. Because you are who you are, I am certain that you will bridge the worlds of the seeing and unseeing, always with a shining smile (in Sinhala, Harshani means "smile,") applying your strengths to create a world in which everyone lives together in harmony.

Wataru Takeshita
Nippon Lighthouse Welfare Center for The Blind

Message to Trainee

Harshani, thank you for coming to Uni for your one-month training. You had a clear goal of working for students with disabilities at a university and always worked hard on the training. You were very curious and tried everything we suggested. Especially memorable was how you would learn something new and immediately think about how to put it to work in Sri Lanka, and how you would immediately write or take a video about it, in Sinhala, about everything you learned, vigorously posting them. On the other hand you also had a fun side. We joked around while eating ice cream during your training. All of these are fond memories.

Being able to experience the training with you were a very meaningful opportunity for us, allowing us to reflect on the meanings and roles of our daily activities. Harshani, we hope you utilize your analytical skills and ability to widely disseminate news and lead Sri Lanka's efforts in the field of disability. We are looking forward to working together with you in the near future for the welfare of university students with disability in both Sri Lanka and Japan.

Masayuki Yasuda
Advisor for Students with Disabilities
Administrative Department
NPO Uni

Breaking Barriers: Fostering the Path to Transformational Leadership

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 31 years old
Physical impairment

Fields of interest

1. Japan's Technological Capabilities and the Lives of People with Disabilities
2. Social Security in Japan
3. Creating a Network That Will Lead to Future Activities

Introduction

My first experience with the Duskin training program provided me with a deep understanding of designing training sessions with diverse content. Leadership, I learned, is an ongoing journey enriched by a wealth of information. This program, a melting pot of knowledge, became a transformative experience that expanded my horizons and profoundly influenced my perspective on leadership and inclusivity.
Venturing outdoors independently in my wheelchair underscored the importance of the Barrier-Free concept. In an ideal society, all public spaces should be barrier-free, enabling everyone, including people with disabilities, to enjoy dining out and spending quality time with their families without any hindrances. This vision of accessibility and inclusivity ensures that everyone can participate fully in social and cultural activities.

"I loved Japan for its world-famous values of meticulous service (omotenashi), respect, harmony, and dedication to excellence in all aspects of life."

As someone with a physical disability, I often contemplate transportation, roads, and, notably, accessible toilets. At a Barrier-Free Expo, I witnessed Japan's remarkable technological advancements in areas like beds, toilets, baths, and transportation solutions. These innovations highlighted the critical role of accessible design in enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, reinforcing my commitment to promoting inclusivity.

Japanese Language Training: A Journey of Growth

During three months of intensive Japanese language training at Toyama Sunrise in Tokyo, I immersed myself in mastering the language, which was more than acquiring linguistic skills—it was a journey into understanding Japan's cultural values of respect, harmony, and attention to detail. Guided by exceptional instructors whose patient teaching and cultural insights enriched my learning experience, I achieved proficiency in

understanding and speaking Japanese, motivating me to pursue fluency in the language.

Homestay Reflection

In Miyazaki Prefecture, nestled on Kyushu Island in southern Japan, I experienced the region's renowned natural beauty. Hosted graciously by Yamanouchi-san at Yah!do, a hub for cultural immersion, I found myself captivated by Miyazaki's stunning beaches and scenic coastal drives. Yamanouchi-san's warmth and hospitality created lasting memories of peace and belonging, inspiring me to capture Miyazaki's essence in a video titled "Amazing Miyazaki."
Yah!do CIL's architecture blended traditional Japanese aesthetics with modern functionality, enhancing my experience amidst tranquil mountain views. The opportunity to welcome the new year surrounded by serene sea beaches and majestic mountains was a privilege. Miyazaki's unmatched tranquillity and natural splendor continue to resonate deeply with me, and I eagerly anticipate the chance to revisit this cherished place.

Japanese Food: A Reflection of Culture and Values

I enjoyed famous dishes like Halal ramen and halal yakiniku, soba, udon, sushi, sashimi, tako(octopus) and vegetable and fish tempura, but one of my favourites that I miss back in my country is onigiri with tuna and mayonnaise.

Inaugural Ski Experience

My first ski experience in Niigata, Japan, was a life-changing journey filled with anticipation and exhilaration. Despite the cold and physical challenges, learning to ski and using a bi-ski for individuals with disabilities taught me invaluable lessons in resilience and determination. The experience garnered media attention, highlighting the importance of overcoming obstacles and pursuing personal goals with unwavering belief.

Group Training

During group training, I studied welfare services, the history of the disability movement, universal design principles, and Japan's various disability support systems. These sessions provided a comprehensive overview of the systematic efforts to support individuals with disabilities, highlighting the importance of inclusive policies and practices. We also focused on peer support, self-reflection, and the life curve, which offered valuable perspectives on the challenges and triumphs faced by individuals with disabilities.
The training emphasized the significance of a comprehensive approach to disability support, integrating social, economic, and psychological aspects. This multidimensional perspective enriched my understanding of how various factors contribute to the well-being and empowerment of individuals with disabilities.

Individual Training

Delving into the realm of DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) technology proved to be incredibly enlightening. DAISY technology, designed to make information accessible to individuals with visual impairments, provided a glimpse into the potential of assistive technologies. My interest lies in comprehending technology designed specifically for individuals with disabilities, such as text-to-audio

conversion and facilitating image descriptions. However, I acknowledge that despite the invaluable solutions DAISY offers, it may not currently reach all individuals who could benefit. Therefore, I plan to conduct further research on DAISY in the future to gain deeper insights into its efficacy and potential areas for improvement.
While undergoing individual training, I had the opportunity to visit Hands On Tokyo, where I was introduced to their groundbreaking food truck concept. This concept, which brings food services to underserved areas, highlighted the power of innovation in addressing social needs. Inspired by their innovative approach, I am now enthusiastic about leading the implementation of a food truck project tailored to the specific context of Bangladesh. I intend to analyze the unique challenges and opportunities in the region to develop innovative solutions that align with local needs and preferences.

Machine Learning Lab Experience

At the Machine Learning Lab in Kanagawa Institute of Technology, I immersed myself in Advanced Assistive Technology, gaining insights into innovative technologies poised to transform support for individuals with disabilities. Engaging with AI and Robotics, my focus is on bridging the gap between technological innovation and user needs, ensuring solutions are both effective and relevant. With Bangladesh's burgeoning tech sector and my passion for AI, I am poised to leverage this experience for impactful contributions in the field.

Vision for Change

My vision is to establish a Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Bangladesh, transforming the social protection system to empower individuals with disabilities and promote their full inclusion in society. Partnering with Mainstream Association, Muchu Center, and others, I am committed to fostering

lasting change. Since returning, I have initiated inclusive training sessions and strategic meetings to advance our goals, recognizing the importance of a barrier-free society for all.

Insights and Future Initiatives

The establishment of Mainstream Association, Partner, and Muchu Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Japan was a significant endeavour

fraught with challenges, underscoring the rigorous nature of the disability rights movement. Overcoming obstacles such as accessibility issues and societal attitudes required dedicated efforts, yet Japanese leaders' unwavering commitment has led to the creation of more inclusive environments marked by barrier-free access.

My stay provided profound insights into the daily lives of individuals with disabilities in Japanese households. Witnessing firsthand the adaptations and innovations within these homes deepened my understanding of the practical challenges faced by the disabled community. While accessibility remains an ongoing issue in Japanese homes, the CIL movement has spurred governmental efforts to enhance social security measures. Reflecting on these experiences, I see potential for a similar wave of activism in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, there is a pressing need to establish a CIL tailored to local contexts, engaging in workshops and research to understand the needs and aspirations of the disability community comprehensively. This initiative must involve national leaders, grassroots networks, urban and rural communities, and academia to ensure inclusivity. Webinars and consultations with government officials and organizational representatives are crucial for gathering diverse perspectives and fostering widespread understanding. Securing sustainable funding is paramount for the CIL's long-term viability. Exploring various funding sources—from governmental grants to private donations—is essential to support its establishment and ongoing operations. My training in Japan has facilitated valuable partnerships with Japanese organizations, enabling collaboration and knowledge exchange that will support the development of the CIL in Bangladesh.

Upon returning, our group training transitioned into proposal development, action planning, and networking with institutions like the Nippon Foundation and JICA. These efforts culminated in a final presentation, articulating our collective goals and aspirations for advancing disability rights upon our return to Bangladesh. Partnering with organizations like AAR Japan and SHAPLA NEER further aligns our efforts with existing humanitarian support structures, reinforcing our commitment to achieving tangible outcomes in Bangladesh's disability rights movement.

Conclusion

As we left Japan on July 13, 2024, we carried with us unforgettable experiences and immense gratitude to the Duskin Ainowa Foundation for their steadfast support. This journey highlighted the transformative power of exploration and collaboration. Toyama Sunrise stands out not just as a training center but as a place where deep connections were built and insights were gained. I am grateful to JSRPD for nurturing us into effective leaders.

Reflecting on this experience, I reaffirm my commitment: "If I can't, no one can." This belief inspires me to face challenges with resilience and push boundaries with determination. Looking forward to our reunion, Duskin, where I hope to share exciting news and achievements. Until then, take care and stay tuned for what lies ahead!

Individual Training Schedule

Mar. to May 2024	
Mar. 4 to 18	Assistive Technology Development Organization
Mar. 21 to 24	Hands On Tokyo
Mar. 25 to 29	Kanagawa Institute of Technology
Apr. 4	Specified Nonprofit Corporation, SHAPLA NEER = Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support
Apr. 11 and 12	AAR Japan
Apr. 15 to May 31	Mainstream Association

Message to Trainee

My first impression of Jahirul was that he was a very serious man. I was worried whether he would blend in at Mainstream Association especially with our unique atmosphere but that worry instantly evaporated when he arrived with a brilliant smile.
This time the schedule was rather packed with training and leisure activities, but he enjoyed everything to the fullest.

He has a gift for brightening up the atmosphere. I have great hopes that he will do very well in Bangladesh as a leader for those in need.

Eriko Manano
Mainstream Association

Message to Trainee

I am sure there were many things you found difficult in Japan, such as food you could not eat and practices you needed to follow because of your cultural background. However, you were always interacting with everyone with a smile, no matter who they were, and eagerly tried everything you encountered. We played a lot together during Golden Week, going to Kyoto and Kobe, enjoying a barbecue and more. It was a great joy for us to be able to play and learn with you for the one and a half months.

You told us you are going to develop a center for independent living in Bangladesh and work on it. We are delighted that you found our activity inspiring. I am sure we will see each other again, so brush up on your Japanese more by then!

Natsuo Tamura
Mainstream Association