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Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan

TRAINEE REPORT

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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 2024, a total of 151 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 24th-year trainees. In this report, four 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.

Executive Committee for the Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan

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

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

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Training Schedule

Sep. 22 and 23, 2024	Arriving Japan
Sep. 25, 2024	Opening ceremony
Sep. 26 to Oct. 3, 2024	Orientation
Sep. 27, 2024 to Jan. 5, 2025	Japanese & Sign Language training
Dec. 27, 2024 to Jan. 6, 2025	Homestay
Jan. 17 to 20, 2025	Ski training
Dec. 16 to 26, 2024 Jan. 16 to 31, 2025	Group training 1
Feb. 3 to May. 16, 2025	Individual training
May. 19 to June. 20, 2025	Group training 2
June. 24, 2025	Presentation of training achievements Commencement ceremony
June. 25, 2025	Leaving Japan

Byambasuren Bumchin Mongolia, 36 years old Hearing Impairment : Deaf

The Seeds of Joy that Began in Japan

Fields of interest
Activities by organization of persons with disabilities
Sign Language interpreters in Japan
Deaf education

Stepping into the Land of the Rising Sun…

On September 23, 2024 — the International Day of Sign Languages — I set foot in Japan for the very first time to join the 24th Duskin Leadership Training Program. This was not just a journey abroad, but the beginning of my deep commitment to seek solutions to the challenges faced by Deaf people in Mongolia, to grow personally, and to learn as much as I could. Coming to Japan, leaving my four young children behind in Mongolia was a decision filled with emotional weight and sacrifice. But my strong will to learn and to contribute more to others gave me the courage to take this step.

From the moment I arrived, I was welcomed by Japan's refined culture, cleanliness, warm social interactions, and advanced technological lifestyles. I was also introduced to fellow trainees from Taiwan, Bangladesh, and Nepal — individuals with shared aspirations. The nine months of interaction during which we encouraged and learned from one another have become an invaluable asset to me.

Language: The Gateway to Knowledge

During the first month of my stay in Japan, I faced a language barrier. It was difficult not being able to express myself fully or understand others, which limited my efforts to study and communicate. However, thanks to the support of four Deaf instructors who taught me Japanese Sign Language (JSL), I was able to overcome this challenge in a short time.

In Japan, I truly came to understand the phrase "language is the gateway to knowledge." Learning JSL and written Japanese became the foundation not only for communication but also for achieving the goals I had set when I arrived in Japan. Learning Japanese Sign Language has given me access to a wide range of information, including TV programs by sign language interpreters and videos created by Deaf people themselves. It has also deepened my understanding of Japanese culture, social issues, and the lives and rights of Deaf people.

Ten Days Living with Japanese Deaf Families

For ten days during the New Year holiday in 2025, I had the precious opportunity to visit and stay with Deaf families in Hiroshima and Nara. Through this experience, I came to understand and participate in the lifestyle, daily routines, and traditional customs of Japanese families. On January 1st, I visited the home of the parents of a Deaf host in Nara Prefecture. We celebrated the New Year together, enjoying a traditional holiday meal in a warm, joyful, and heartfelt atmosphere filled with laughter and good memories. I also visited historical sites in Hiroshima and Nara. Among them, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park left a particularly strong impression on me. Learning about the damage caused by the atomic bomb and watching a video of a deaf atomic bomb survivor's testimony gave me a deeper appreciation for the importance of peace and the value of a world without war. What moved me the most was how two deaf families in Japan

warmly welcomed me and kindly shared their daily lives and culture with me. I am filled with heartfelt gratitude.

Individual Training That Deepened My Knowledge and Experience

From February to mid-May 2025, I participated in individual training sessions at government agencies, private organizations, and educational institutions throughout Japan. These training sessions were a very important opportunity to deepen my knowledge and practical experience to bring back to Mongolia.

I trained at the following organizations:

1.Japan ASL Association
2.The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI
3.Tottori Association of the Deaf
4.Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA
5.Hyogo Association of the Deaf
6.Tsukuba University of Technology
7.National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities
8.Meisei Gakuen (School for the Deaf)

Through these trainings, I not only achieved the goals I set at the beginning but also gained a wider range of new insights and knowledge than I had imagined. Although I cannot cover everything due to space limitations, I must emphasize that each experience contributed greatly to my professional development and future endeavors. I was able to deepen my understanding of how Japanese deaf organizations are run, their organizational structure and leadership style, how projects are implemented, and strategies to promote community participation. I also learned a wide range of topics, including interpreter training and examination systems, curriculum construction and teaching methods. I also learned about the Japanese deaf education system, teaching methods, teaching materials, and how teachers work. In addition, I met deaf experts who are active on the front lines and was inspired by their experiences and process of overcoming challenges. I was able to gain a deeper understanding of social welfare services, employment support for deaf people, trends in sign language research, and the current state of policies and projects in Japan. I did not simply accept what I saw and heard, but always asked myself, "How can I apply this when introducing it in Mongolia?" and "What can I learn from Japan's challenges and failures?" as I engaged in the training.

Journeys Enriched with Experiences

Japan is one of the most travel-friendly countries, and I realized this deeply after joining short trips with Deaf friends. So far, I have visited 16 of the 47 prefectures, experiencing the nature, historical sites, delicious local cuisine, culture and

customs of each region. Meeting and interacting with so many people was an experience that opened my eyes to a new world.

One particularly memorable experience was ski training in Niigata. I had tried skiing in Mongolia but wasn't good at it and felt unsure and fearful of trying again. But with the encouragement and support of my instructors, I not only learned how to ski but eventually managed to ski alone. This experience not only gave me a new set of skills but also boosted my confidence to overcome personal limitations.

These trips were not just for sightseeing or fun; they became moments of self-discovery, heartfelt memories, and lasting life experiences.

Sincere Gratitude

Participating in this program and living in Japan despite for a short period of time has been an invaluable experience in my life and has made significant changes in both my personal growth and the development of my professional skills.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Duskin Ainowa Foundation. Without their generous support and funding, this program would not have been possible. I am also deeply thankful to the JSRPD team for meticulously planning and organizing the program with such professionalism and care. Their attention to detail and encouragement were key to my successful learning journey. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the organizations and individuals who provided me with the opportunity for one-on-one training. The knowledge and experiences you shared have become a valuable foundation for my future work. I am also deeply thankful to the teachers who devotedly taught me Japanese and Japanese Sign Language. My sincere appreciation also goes to my Japanese friends who kindly guided me through their beautiful country, making my learning journey even more enriching.

From all the experiences and people I encountered during this training, I learned deeply about the value of knowledge, the power of awareness, and human warmth.

I promise to bring back what I have learned to Mongolia and use it to promote the education, rights, and social inclusion of deaf people.

Individual Training Schedule

Individual Training Schedule

Feb. 1 to 18	Japanese ASL Signers Society	Mar. 31 to Apr. 18	Hyogo Association of the Deaf
Feb. 17 and 20	The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI	Apr. 21 to 25	Tsukuba University of Technology
Feb. 23 to Mar. 5	Tottori Association of the Deaf	Apr. 28 to May. 9	College of Sign Language Interpretation, National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities
Mar. 10 to 28	Deaf Net. KAGOSHIMA	May. 12 to 16	Meisei Gakuen

My Memories of the Trainee and My Expectations for Her

On September 25 last year, Byamba looked very tense as she set arrived in Japan for the first time. And then, on June 24, the day of the closing ceremony, is a reminder each year of how quickly time passes. “Is it already the closing ceremony?” I wonder if others feel the same.

Byamba was a very strong woman and also a mother of four children. While in Japan she worked hard on her training and at the end of each day she talked with her family and children via video call, also helping her children study, making sure that they will not feel lonely.

It was all too clear how hard life had been for her, as a Deaf mother with no access to information in society, and for being unable to communicate what she wanted to say. She was eagerly asking questions and taking notes on how to increase sign language interpreters, how to train them, what kind of systems would facilitate access to the interpreters, and how fee systems work.

She was also constantly thinking about how to work together with Deaf organizations and interpreter organizations and how to approach the government and other institutions. I remember how she said, “Just before I am going home, the government enacted a law promoting sign language policies! I am really looking forward to seeing how it will develop.” I hope Byamba will continue to blossom as a Deaf woman leader in Asia.

Yasunori Shimamoto Director Hyogo Association of the Deaf

Byamba-san, kibaiyanse!

I met Byamba-san for the first time to teach her Japanese sign language online, prior to her visit to Japan. After she arrived in Japan, I continued with her online Japanese sign language training, and to her training at Nonprofit organization DeafNet. KAGOSHIMA. We stayed together till the end of her training.

As she had already been researching sign language in Mongolia, she mastered Japanese sign language amazingly quickly. It was impressive to see how she would actively ask questions and learn about welfare service systems and social welfare resources for deaf people of Kagoshima, as well as regulations and systems to secure financial resources for these activities.

In the after school day service and other activities, we asked Byamba-san to teach Mongolian sign language to children. She would also explain about nomads, including their lifestyle and diet.

The children were fascinated by the lives of the nomads whose way of life is very different from Japan. They seemed especially excited when Byamba-san showed them the Mongolian hand sign for “camel”, which the children most likely found very unusual and interesting.

In a group home, she cooked traditional Mongolian dishes for everyone. In a type-B continuous employment support center, we had a good time enjoying conversation which included Mongolian sign language. Everyone found it very impressive when she communicated in Japanese sign language.

I am certain that Bamba-san will steadily develop a better environment for deaf people in Mongolia, including for deaf education, together with her allies, as she is very keen to do so.

Byamba-san, kibaiyanse! (a Kagoshima dialect meaning “go for it!”)

Rie Sawada Director Non profit Organization DeafNet. KAGOSHIMA

Taslima Sultana Mitu Bangladesh, 29 years old Visual Impairment：Totally Blind

Fields of interest
Assistive devices for persons with disabilities
Independent Living of persons with disabilities
Japanese culture

A Journey of Empowerment and Inclusion: My Duskin Leadership Program Experience in Japan

I am Taslima Sultana Mitu from Bangladesh. As a visually impaired individual, I had the honor of participating in the Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan, starting on September 24 last year. Over the course of ten months, this journey has transformed me both as a person and professionally, empowering me to dream bigger and act with a greater sense of purpose.

At the beginning of the program, I studied Japanese language and Braille. Learning Japanese was quite a challenge, as I had no prior experience with the language. However, with the kind support of our language and Braille teachers and the dedicated staff of JSRPD, and with the encouragement from my fellow trainees, I gradually improved. Weekly report writing in Japanese helped strengthen my reading, writing, and speaking skills. I also took part in yoga classes, which helped me understand the importance of physical and mental well-being.

During the winter holidays, I had an opportunity to stay with two wonderful host families. Their kindness and hospitality made me feel safe and truly welcomed. Through these homestays, I was able to explore Japanese culture in depth, visiting temples, wearing a kimono, tasting new foods, and seeing snow for the first time. Each experience was a new discovery, filled with warmth and joy.

After the homestay, I joined fellow trainees in Niigata for ski training. It was my first time skiing, and though I was initially nervous, the instructors' guidance helped me overcome my fear. I felt proud to challenge myself and discover new strength within.

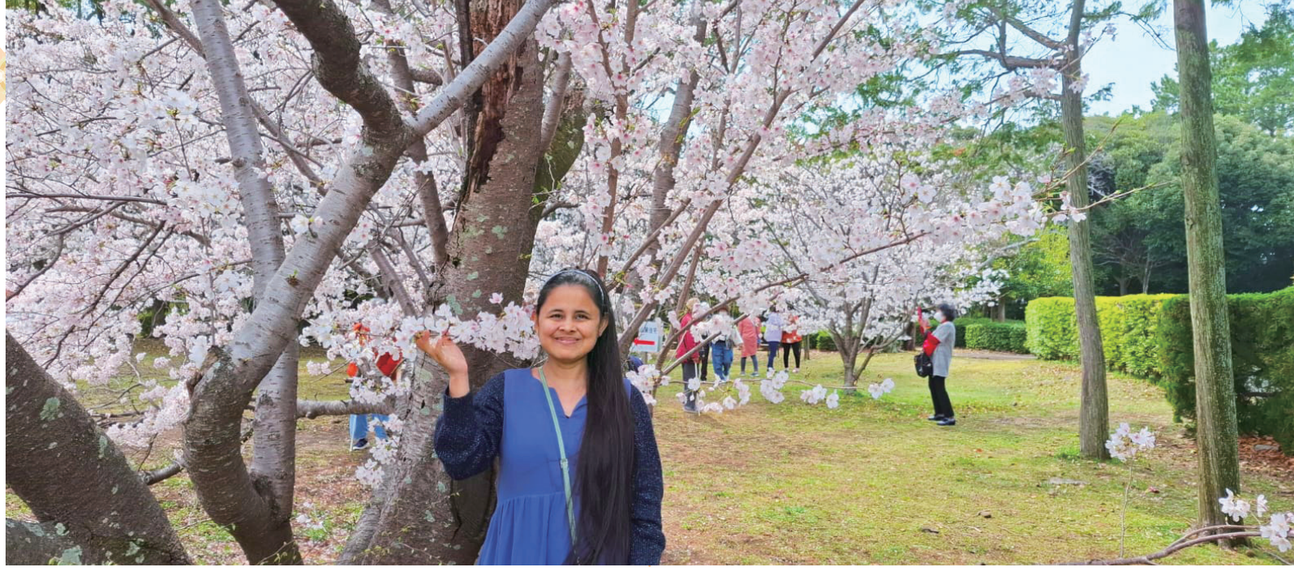
During the group training segment, I learned about Japan's disability laws, welfare systems, and services. We visited various organizations and participated in sessions that taught us about universal design, accessibility, counseling, abuse prevention, and inclusive education. One of the most valuable lessons I took from this time was the importance of teamwork and the power of communication in bringing social change.

My individual training allowed me to explore areas closely related to my interests. At universities and rehabilitation centers, I observed how visually impaired students are supported in education and employment. I spoke with blind professionals and learned about assistive technologies. I also experienced volunteer-based mobility training, which deepened my understanding of how independence is fostered.

At NPO Minori, I engaged in activities such as coffee roasting, making Braille business cards, preparing tennis balls, and gardening, all in a cooperative environment where people with visual and intellectual disabilities worked with dignity. At NPO With, I took part in packaging tasks and played sports like tennis and table tennis. I was especially moved when they prepared Braille instructions for me, making me feel truly included.

I also visited key institutions such as Nippon Lighthouse, Japan Braille Library (JBL), and ATDO. At Nippon Lighthouse, I learned about welfare policies, Braille production, and employment services. At JBL, I explored the history and offerings of Japan's largest library for persons with print disabilities. At ATDO, I was introduced to DAISY book production, which I hope to implement in Bangladesh to make books accessible to all.

A powerful concept I gained from this training is the importance of empowering people with disabilities to make their own decisions and live independently. I saw how assistive devices, employment support, and inclusive communities contribute to this goal. At the UNI, I learned about mobility support and captioning services. At the Nippon Lighthouse Information Center, I saw how volunteer efforts support independence and inclusion.



I also had an opportunity to introduce my own work in Bangladesh at organizations like "Shopno Bangladeshi Shikaku Shougaisha Shien Kyoukai (an association supporting visually impaired children of Bangladesh)" in Shiga and "Shapla Neer (citizens' committee in Japan for overseas support)" in Tokyo. The advice and encouragement I received from Japanese professionals inspired me deeply and gave me new ideas for my future activities.

Outside of training, I enjoyed many cultural and recreational experiences visiting Hikone Castle, attending tea ceremonies, exploring museums, picking strawberries, and participating in music sessions and festivals. These moments taught me the importance of balancing work with joy and self-care.

Throughout the program, I focused on three main goals: (1) to learn about services and daily life for/of people with disabilities in Japan, (2) to understand assistive devices for the visually impaired, and (3) to study Japanese language and culture. With the kind guidance and support I received from so many people, I have successfully achieved these goals.

Looking ahead, I hope to establish an information center in Bangladesh that will include a rehabilitation unit, sports facilities, a music studio, and a café where visually impaired individuals can work and thrive together. I also aim to provide accessible books, Braille materials, and assistive devices to promote education, employment, and independence of people with disabilities.

This journey in Japan has given me more than just knowledge; it has given me courage. I am committed to using these experiences to improve the lives of people with disabilities in my country. I will never give up until I achieve this dream.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made this journey possible. I am especially thankful to our dedicated teachers, the JSRPD staff, my two homestay families, and the organizations that warmly welcomed and supported me throughout. Your guidance and encouragement truly made a difference. Thank you for believing in me.

Individual Training Schedule

Feb. 5	Specified Nonprofit Corporation, SHAPLA NEER
Feb. 10 to 28	Uni
Mar. 3 to 19	Minori
Mar. 24 to Apr. 11	NPO. Co. Rokuseikai Hamamatsu Workshop with the Disabled -WITH-
Apr. 15 to 30	Nippon Lighthouse Information Cent
May. 1 to 5	Shopno Bangladeshi

Individual Training Schedule

May. 1	Shiga Prefectural School for the Blind
May. 8 and 14	HandsOnTokyo
May. 9	AAR Japan
May. 10	International Association for the Visually Impaired
May. 15	Japan Vocational Development Center for the Blind and Low Vision

Always Keep Japanese Songs on Your Lips and a Big Dream in Your Heart!

My first impression of Mitu at the welcome party on the first day was that she was quiet. Contrary to my belief, and to my surprise, she stood in front of a large audience with no hesitation and sang a Bengali song astoundingly beautifully. The next surprise happened during a homestay program. She said she wanted to ride a roller coaster. Her host family, Kubosaki family met her request, and even after that, in Kyoto, she would get on a tandem bicycle and delightedly tear down the path along the Kamogawa River. She had an incredibly positive attitude and explosive energy. In individual training, she learned about and experienced many things, mostly on visual impairment, but what I was not expecting was another surprise. After the training, she gave a presentation entitled “My Dreams” in which she spoke of her grand vision of building an information center for the visually impaired in her country, a center that will enable users to enjoy Braille books and ICT equipment, receive rehabilitations and employment support, enjoy sports, and which will also have a music studio and café. She left her job of a company employee to come to Japan for the Duskin training, but I have heard she has not been able to return to work after she returned home, and she is now looking for work. It is a challenge to realize oneself and open an information center in Bangladesh, a country in which the social status of women and people with disabilities is still low. But keep moving forward, Mitu, always humming the songs you learned in Japan.

Wataru Takeshita Director, Nippon Lighthouse Welfare Center for the Blind

Use Your Smile and Make Your Dream Come True!

It was in the spring of 2025 that Mitu arrived in Hamamatsu, just in time for the cherry blossoms. A petite lady, Mitu arrived at WITH, brimming with smiles and dreams. Our hope for you Mitu is that you will utilize in your future work in Bangladesh the joy you found at WITH from various job experiences, and the joy of applying creative ideas for success –in particular, the kind of joy you expressed when you skillfully created white canes.

Even after you left, we could not forget how you would eat incredibly spicy sweets and dishes without so much as raising an eyebrow, how you were cramming strawberries in your mouth at the strawberry farm, so happy holding strawberries in both hands, and how beautifully you sang the national anthem of Bangladesh as well as the japanese song “Nada Sou Sou (Down Come My Tears)”. Neither could we forget the proud moments of your leadership training presentation in Osaka, and the end-of-the-training ceremony.

On another subject, we are really looking forward to your goal of building an information center back home! I have great expectations for a multi-purpose center fully equipped with a café, a music studio, a para-sport gym, a Braille library, and a rehabilitation center. Why? Because your basic concept sounds “fun!”.

It is okay to dream big. Talk to many people joyfully with a smile. Doing this will bring many views and ideas, making even bigger dreams come true. Dreams are supposed to be made to come true.

You have become friends with people from around the world you met during the training, and with Japanese friends. Once we know the names of the people living in other countries, and get to know about their flowers and trees, and their songs, there will be no more war. Songs are universal words of peace across the world.

Bring peace to the world Mitu, with your beautiful smile and songs, and with many friends.

As there is no better welfare than peace.

Chiaki Shiba Advisor Hamamatsu WorkShop with The Disabled -WITH

Ke Wei Duan Taiwan, 27 years old Physical Disability：Cerebral palsy

The Journey of Growth Carved Through Challenges

Fields of interest
Management of DPO and NGO
Independent Living in the community and awareness-raising activities
Regional design
Social welfare system
Special needs education

Introduction

My name is Coco. I am from Taiwan. I have cerebral palsy. I work as a social worker at the New Vitality Independent Living Association in Taipei.

About Taiwan

Taiwan has systems for people with disabilities, but there are still many problems. Many people with disabilities cannot live alone and need their families’ help. Students with disabilities can attend regular schools, but discrimination still exists. The gap between cities and rural areas is large, and rural areas have fewer barrier-free facilities. Therefore, there is still much work to be done in Taiwan.

Starting Life in Japan with Both Anxiety and Excitement

Before going to Japan, I was full of excitement and anxiety. I didn’t know if I could live alone in a foreign country or what my future would look like. Although I felt unprepared, I departed for Japan. My biggest concern was the language barrier. I worried about whether I could understand English and Japanese, how to learn the language, and how to express my feelings.

During the training and leisure period, I visited various places in Japan. While in Tokyo, I often challenged myself to explore alone and visited many tourist sites. Living in an unfamiliar town was a very important experience. Facing many unknown challenges by myself, I sometimes got lost but was able to find the right way by looking at maps and asking people for directions. These experiences helped me gain confidence and improve my adaptability.

Walking Together and Never Giving Up—Overcoming Difficulties

Studying Japanese was very difficult for the first three months. Because of my cerebral palsy, speaking was hard. However, my teachers helped me find study methods, and I learned various ways to express myself. Not only speaking but also writing was an important form of expression. Gradually, my Japanese improved. After returning to Taiwan, I want to continue studying Japanese, read more

Japanese information, and interact with Japanese friends.
During my homestay in Yamaguchi Prefecture, I experienced many aspects of Japanese culture. I wore a kimono and visited a shrine to pray. It was my first time using Japanese to communicate with my host family and we found ways to communicate together. Although I caught the flu during the New Year's, I overcame the difficulty with my host family and felt closer to them.
The ski training was scary at first. To make the "impossible possible," a lot of preparation, design, and support are needed. Ski instructors conduct much research, improve equipment, deeply understand disabilities, and prepare

behind the scenes to allow people with disabilities to ski freely and safely. At first, I couldn't control the movement well and failed many times. But in the end, I was able to control direction, maintain balance, and ski steadily on my own. I was truly happy and enjoyed the moment of success—it was an unforgettable experience!
I traveled to various places with fellow trainees, sharing many experiences, which brought us closer together. Together, we worked hard, never gave up, and overcame difficulties.

Growth Gained from Diverse Learning and Experiences

The training included group and individual sessions. In the individual training, I visited various independent living centers and companies: YAH!DO Miyazaki, Independent Support Center Oita, Tsukuba Center for Independent Living Honyara, Independent Living Muchu Center, Partner, Mainstream Association, Movement, Center for Independent Living Realize, Center for Independent Living Aruru, Center for Independent Living Connect, and OMRON Taiyo Co., Ltd.
From both group and individual training, there were eight important lessons: disability welfare systems, independent living, universal design, activities by young people with disabilities, disaster prevention, inclusive education, community exchange, and play.
I learned about disability welfare systems — laws, systems, and history of the movement. Comparing such situations with Taiwan, I deepened my understanding. I felt that cooperation with communities leads to better support. At a parade I joined themed "A city where everyone can live comfortably," I experienced a spirit of cooperation. Both Japan and Taiwan truly hope for systems and societies where people with disabilities can live safely.
Regarding independent living, I learned the meaning of "choose by yourself, decide by yourself, take responsibility yourself." I felt that self-directed support services like independent living programs, peer counseling, and assistance are very important. I also learned about examples of community life for people with severe disabilities, mental disorders, and intellectual disabilities. I learned that it is necessary to provide appropriate support according to the characteristics of the disability and the wishes of each individual. After returning to Taiwan, I want to improve independent living systems further.
For universal design, I experienced designs and facilities that anyone can use easily in tourist spots, workplaces, and transportation. For example, place design, assistant support, and use of tools are important. We learned ways to enjoy hot springs more safely and comfortably with assistants and assistive devices. I also learned the difference between

barrier-free design and universal design. I participated in barrier-free, reasonable accommodation, and hospitality training. It is very important for people in the shopping street to understand disabilities well. Considering diverse people allows people to use services more comfortably and participate in various activities.

In Kansai, I thought it was wonderful that young people with disabilities could grow while engaging in activities with peers. Activities of disability organizations (DPOs) are very important as places for connection and learning. Supporting each other strengthens the ability to face difficulties.
For disaster prevention, we experienced evacuation shelters and created individual evacuation plans. It is important to consider disaster prevention from the perspective of people with disabilities, and to always be connected to the local community, not just being prepared.

In group training, I learned about study methods using DAISY materials. In individual training, I learned about community

activities, theater, and special needs schools. I learned the concept and practice of inclusive education. Inclusive education is important, and crucial for students, teachers, and other people to interact equally, and understand and respond to people with disabilities.
In group training, I learned about the CBR Matrix and Twin Track Approach, and finally understood what I had been struggling with for a long time. Using the CBR Matrix allows a deep understanding of the lives and issues of people with disabilities in the community and helps consider directions for action. Therefore, to advance plans, it is necessary to improve skills in facilitation, coordination, communication, and negotiation and keep practicing. I also want to learn more deeply about CBR and CBID. I participated in community exchange activities. Places where people with disabilities and community members can interact and help each other are very important. It is also important for people with disabilities to participate in society. Thanks to community exchange, more people have come to understand disabilities in daily life and have a broader understanding when interacting with people with disabilities.
Regarding play, I had many new experiences and challenges and was able to check barrier-free conditions in different places. There were many unforgettable experiences.

Summary

During the training, I learned that "a place to belong," "companions," "aspirations," and "LEAD ON (passing on / moving forward)" are very important. In order to create a truly inclusive society in which everyone can participate, and we must work hard together with or without disabilities, help each other, and grow together. It is important that we continue to move forward to improve society in which everyone is equal and their dignity protected.

Japan, and through many learnings, presentations of my personal history, and dialogues with people with disabilities and supporters, I was able to reorganize my life. I realized my past experiences were not only painful but also important forces that helped me grow. I gradually came to feel that I had value, without having to prove my existence.

I learned that when troubled, it is important to try various methods by myself and consult those around me. Anxiety and tension in my heart gradually calmed. Even when difficulties and challenges come, I feel I am developing the ability to stabilize my mind little by little. I want to continue walking at my own pace with a soft and stable feeling.

The End of the Journey and a New Beginning

During the training, I learned many new things and experienced various Japanese cultures. I came to know myself better. I became happier, kinder, and stronger than before. Hope emerged, and I gained the strength to move toward the future. I sincerely thank the Duskin Ainowa Foundation, the Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, Toyama Sunrise, my teachers, and the training center staff. I will never forget their kind teaching and warm support. I look forward to seeing everyone again.

My Dream: Beyond Barriers, Toward a Society Where Everyone Walks Together

After returning home, I want to create inclusive spaces for everyone to participate. I want a society in which more people with disabilities can live in the community. I want to further improve Taiwan's disability welfare system. I will focus on advocacy activities and youth empowerment in disability organizations (DPOs). I will also interact with other independent living associations in Taiwan. Furthermore, I want to convey the ideas of universal design and inclusion to communities, schools, companies, and public institutions.

Inner Change

Before coming to Japan, I always thought, "I want to live, study, and work just like everyone else," and worked very hard. But through those efforts, I often felt mentally exhausted and pressured. I thought, "I must not fall behind" and "I must not be different from others." However, through the training in

Individual Training Schedule

Individual Training Schedule

Feb. 3 to 28	Center for Independent Living 'YAH! DO' Miyazaki	Mar. 20 to 28	Center for Independent Living 'Honyara'
Mar. 3 to 13	Center for Independent Living 'Oita'	Mar. 31 to May. 9	Independent Living 'MUCHU' Center
Mar. 10 to 12	OMRON Taiyo Co.,LTD.	May. 12 to 16	Center for Independent Living Connect
Mar. 19	Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association		

A Message to Coco-san

From March 31 to May 9, 2025, Coco-san underwent training at Independent Living "MUCHU" Center in Suminoe District, Osak. Looking back, though it was only about with long holidays in the middle, it was a blessing for us as well blessing to have spent such emotionally intense and touching moments together, becoming allies in the true sense of the word.

I cannot describe enough how wonderful Coco-san is. She was always cheerful and always the leader of the team. She was always sweet and smiling but was also hardworking. She worked with strong enthusiasm throughout the training and consistently remained a grounded leader. She tackled different themes such as community exchange, community building, disaster prevention and inclusive education one by one, always considering it important to exchange ideas and views with us. We also made sure to create as many opportunities as possible for her to have first-hand experience of such themes. Regardless of the theme, the key is always to connect with others, getting to know one another, ensuring pleasant communication. I strongly believe that Coco-san's experience of putting ideas to work and becoming allies with so many people, despite her own difficulties in speech, will serve as a foundation for her growth ahead.

Coco-san, make sure to have enough sleep and rest well after working hard. See you very soon!

Hitomi Uchida Independent Living "MUCHU" Center

To Coco-chan

"How charming!" was the thought that crossed my mind every time Coco-chan beamed, giving a thumbs up for an "OK!" sign. "Charming," meaning very attractive, but Coco-chan's smile reflected her personality, of always trying to be sincere to herself and others. I am sure this is what drew people to her.

Being a charming person is an important quality for someone in a leadership position. Even if someone says something "right, if others find the person tiring or irritating to be with, they will not support that person. In this sense, Coco-chan will make a great leader of disability movements, who will create the world as described in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. That is what I believe and hold high expectations for her.

Coco-chan, you stayed in Miyazaki for four weeks. During that time, you enthusiastically listened to others as they explained Japan's disability movements and personal assistance services. Coco-chan, think hard about what you can do for your allies in Taiwan and around the world. Struggle hard, take action, and make mistakes. And then, eat some pudding, and watch Conan to cheer up, and stand up again, and again, no matter how many mistakes you have made.
We are cheering for you from all corners of Japan.

Toshio Yamanouchi Director Center for Independent Living 'Yah! Do' Miyazaki

Laxmi Kunwar Nepal, 35 years old Physical Disability : Spinal Cord Injury

On Being a Good Leader and Motivating Newcomers with Disabilities

Fields of interest
- Independent Living
- System design for disability
- Awareness-raising activities and how to negotiate
- Human resources development
- How to write reports and project proposals

This training was a big opportunity to change my life. Before the training, I already knew about the Duskin Leadership Training Program because I was working at the independent living center Lalitpur Nepal, with the 6th Duskin trainee, Mr. Krishna Gautam.

Japanese Language

I had tried to study Japanese language in Nepal, but there were no accessible classes. That is why I was not able to study Japanese. When I came to Japan, I started Japanese language classes at Toyama Sunrise. I was impressed because the teachers were very kind and taught us in a way that was very easy to understand. I also put my mind into working hard. I never got bored with the Japanese class, right to the end. My speaking and writing skills improved day by day. It was a big achievement for me. Japanese language will also be useful in Nepal because I am working at the independent living center Lalitpur, Nepal, which is being supported by Japan.

Homestay

I stayed in Nagoya for roughly ten days for a homestay program. My host Ayumi-san was a very helpful person, she already knew about my disability well, and that was why she already had things important for me ready, such as a catheter and a rubber sheet, which I use daily. She always took care of me like a sister. We celebrated the New Year at her house, and I enjoyed feeling like they were my own family. Every day I went to meet her Japanese friends and visited different places with her by accessible car. I spent a memorable time experiencing Japanese culture and Japanese food.

Experience

In Nepal, we do not have a sea, but I like the sea and swimming in the sea. That is why I requested the staffs in the center that I wanted to swim in the ocean. However, everybody kindly said to me, “It is very cold now, so not a good idea”. Finally, I went to the sea, in Kobe, with the members of Mainstream Association and swam. Swimming in the sea is very different from swimming in a pool.

Group training

During the group training, I learned the development of disability related laws and policies in Japan, Inclusive education, abuse prevention, facilitation and reflection, transition of movement for/by persons with disabilities in Japan and its characteristics, and social welfare services. I will need to work in a team and ensure regular negotiation to change our society, policy, and laws.

Individual Training

During my individual training, I went to various independent living centers in Japan. For example, CIL (Center of Independent Living) Iruka in Okinawa, CIL Kirara, CIL Oita, AJU The House for Independence, CIL Hikari in Kagoshima, Mainstream Association, Independent Living Muchu center, and CIL Partner. I got to know about the concept of independent living and the lives of people with disabilities in Japan. I was also surprised to see the lifestyle of people with severe disabilities using technology and PA services. I also learned about the history of independent living and how to do activities, such as barrier-free campaigns, PA support systems in Japan for persons with disabilities, independent living programs, peer support, peer counseling, etc. I think peer counseling and peer support are very important for empowering people with disabilities. Self-acceptance is also very important for people with disabilities before they engage themselves in activities to change society. “Making choices and decisions by oneself and taking responsibility for the choice and decisions, one has made,” is the most important concept in the independent living movement. However, in most developing countries around the world, it is still believed that people with disabilities have to live with their families even as adults. Usually in these countries, there is no barrier-free infrastructure, no helper system, no government pension. Despite all this, I believe that in the future, people with disabilities in Nepal will also be able to live independently.

OMRON Taiyo Co., Ltd

I visited OMRON Taiyo Co., Ltd. It is a big company. I saw their working system in Japan. There are a lot of people with disabilities working together with people without disabilities. If people with disabilities have access to barrier-free

infrastructure and technology, they will also be able to do everything.

Conclusion

In my country, there are so many issues surrounding people with disabilities. They include presence of so many barriers, and people not knowing anything about independent living. There is no barrier-free environment and infrastructure, and that is why so many people with disabilities have few job opportunities and education. In particular, people with severe disabilities only stay at home. However, I would like to solve this problem step by step. It is difficult to work on these issues alone, so first, I would like to bring some peers together and also consult with my seniors. I would like to tell many people about the things that I learned in Japan. I will work with other disability organizations and work together to receive disability services by the government. In particular, I want to work on inclusive education in Nepal and PA support system for persons with severe disabilities. Nothing is impossible if we work together for change little by little.

Thanks.

I would like to express my thanks to everyone, including my teachers, host family, the members of the centers I visited during my individual training, the Duskin AINOWA Foundation and the JSRPD team. Your work is wonderful. You have helped people with disabilities from various countries of Asia, teaching them many important things in Japan. I will be committed to working hard for people with disabilities after I go back to my country.

Individual Training Schedule

Feb. 4 to 28	Center for Independent Living ‘Iruka Okinawa’
Mar. 3 to 13	Center for Independent Living ‘Oita’
Mar. 10 to 12	OMRON Taiyo Co.,Ltd.

Individual Training Schedule

Mar. 17 to 28	AJU Center for Independent Living
Mar. 31 to Apr. 11	Center for Independent Living ‘Hikari’
Apr. 14 to May. 16	Mainstream Association

A Message to Laxmi

First of all, thank you so much for spending time with us. It has already been roughly four months since you finished your training with us, but I still have vivid memories of the good times we’ve had together. During the training on reasonable accommodation in Oita city, do you remember we had a simulated experience of being outdoors as people with disabilities? As snow danced in the air. It was freezing.

Let’s look back a little at your training programs. You participated in Kanda PJ (Umitamago Aquarium and the Sunflower Ferry Terminal), Zakiyama & Wakasugi PJ (Oita Prefectural Museum of History, Awashima Park, Matama Beach, Bungo Takada Showa Town, and Izakaya Nijuhachimangoku, followed by a karaoke session), Orita & Wada PJ (Beppu Umijigoku hot spring, hot spring steam viewing point, Hell Steaming Workshop, Beppu Kannawa Jigoku Onsen Museum, and Miyuki-no-yu hot spring), Orita ＆Ikegami PJ (Beppu Tsurumi Ropeway, Lake Shidaka, and a stroll in Yufuin), as well as Zakiyama PJ (home party, Izakaya Aun, and a stroll in downtown Beppu).

The ten days passed so quickly. Our encounter was so fortuitous, but I strongly believe we will meet again.

Finally, from all of us at the Center for Independent Living ‘Oita’, we will continue supporting you all the way. We wish you, Laxmi and Coco, all the best for your efforts ahead, step by step. Thank you! …And, we will meet again♪

Hidekazu Goto Chair Center for Independent Living ‘Oita’

Dear Laxmi,

Laxmi, the days you spent with us at CIL Iruka for your one-month training were truly joyful and bustling as you were so cheerful and full of energy. Every day, we would start with our usual Nepali language class, and thanks to you, our office felt more and more cheerful by the day. You did so many things with us. You visited and studied how people requiring medical care and people with intellectual disabilities lived independently. You enjoyed a hotpot party with college students. You visited inclusive education sites. And oh, those parties! Every day, you would excitedly chant “Party, party!”, and end up eating a bit too much, gaining a little weight (laughing). It was a joy to watch how you would go up to and talk to anyone cheerfully regardless of who they were, purely enjoying conversations. Your cheerfulness and energy will undoubtedly positively influence the community life of people with severe disabilities. Use your power to change society, step by step, so that people with disabilities will be able to live happily and live their own way. As you move forward, you may often find it hard to figure out which way to go, and you may face challenges. If you ever feel that way, do not hesitate to contact us any time. We will always be cheering for you.

Cai Shu Fan (Maruko) Representative Director
Non Profit Organization Center for Independent Living ‘Iruka Okinawa’ (Cai Shu Fan)