

For Japanese and Foreign Residents

Community Exchange Handbook

~Building a Cohesive Society through Kindness~

日本人と外国人のための
地域交流ハンドブック
～やさしさから始める共生社会～



Introduction

In the community where we live, there are many different people. They vary in nationality, age, gender, whether or not they have a disability, culture, personality, way of thinking, and their strengths and weaknesses.

We began creating this handbook in response to those who expressed a desire for clues on how to build a community where everyone, regardless of those differences, can live safely and happily.

This handbook is still a work in progress. Every community has its own unique charm and diverse residents. As various initiatives progress in different places, we hope to improve this handbook step by step.

Let's work together to spread "Warm Hearts," "Kind Words," and "Plain Japanese" (*Yasashii Nihongo*) throughout our community.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

February 2026

Kitakyushu International Association

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Introduction

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Who exactly are "Foreign Residents"?

The term "foreigners" includes a wide variety of people.

There are international tourists, international students, technical intern trainees, and even "individuals with foreign citizenship who were born and raised in Japan and speak only Japanese." The stories about "foreigners" you see in the news or on the internet do not necessarily apply to every "foreigner" living in Japan.

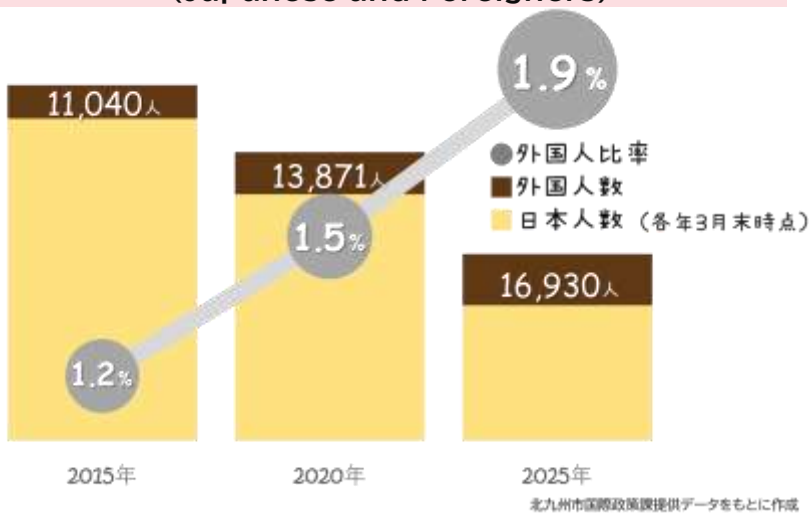
Even if they do not hold Japanese citizenship, those who live in Japan for more than 90 days have a Certificate of Residence (*Juminhyo*), just like Japanese citizens.

Furthermore, they pay health insurance and pension premiums in the same way as Japanese people, and those who work also pay taxes, contributing to society as fellow residents.

※This handbook was created for all residents (Japanese and Foreigners) living in Kitakyushu.

Therefore, in this handbook, the term "Foreigners" refers to "Foreign Residents" unless otherwise specified.

1. Trends in the Number of Residents (Japanese and Foreigners)



Population of Kitakyushu City:

Approx.

900,000

Foreign Population:

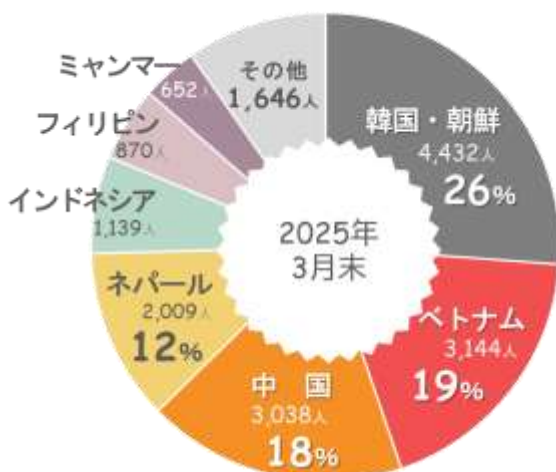
Approx.

16,000

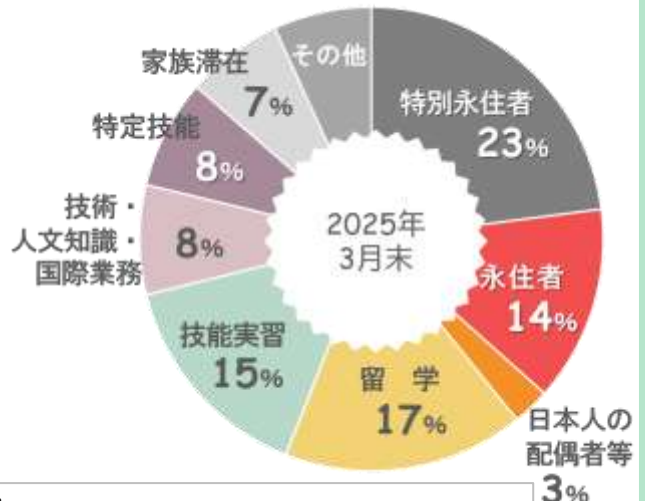
Percentage of Foreigners in the Total Population:

Approx. **2 %**

2. Number of Foreign Residents (by Nationality)



3. Number of Foreign Residents (by Status of Residence)



※Note 1: What is "Specified Skilled Worker (*Tokutei Gino*)"?

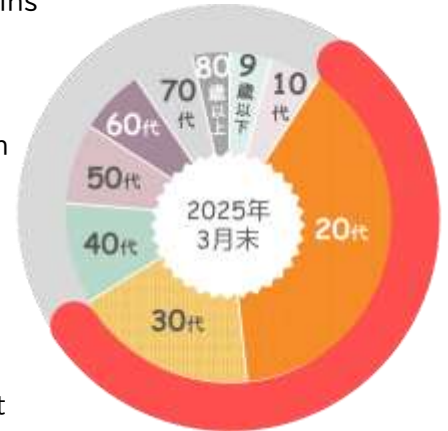
This Status of Residence was established in April 2019 to welcome foreign human resources with a certain level of specific expertise and skills who can contribute immediately in industrial sectors facing serious labor shortages in Japan, such as nursing care, construction, and the food service industry.

4. Number of Foreign Residents (by Age Group)

Population decline is progressing throughout Japan. In particular, securing a workforce is a serious challenge. If there are not enough people to work, what will happen to our lives? If there are not enough drivers, the number of buses and trains may decrease, and routes might be discontinued.

If there are not enough engineers and workers, repairing houses, facilities, and roads may take a long time, or they might be left broken and abandoned. If there are not enough caregivers, the quality of nursing care services may decline, or people may no longer be able to receive care.

Actually, these are examples that have already started to occur in various places. Many companies say, "No one applies even when we post job openings" or "We would go out of business without foreign workers." In particular, Kitakyushu City is experiencing a very advanced aging population and a declining birthrate, and the generation that supports society continues to decrease. On the other hand, looking at foreigners alone, the proportion of the generation that can serve as the workforce exceeds 70%.



Created based on data provided by the International Policy Division, City of Kitakyushu

Our lives are supported by foreigners even in ways we cannot see, such as in convenience store lunch boxes and package deliveries. In the future, the person who takes care of us when we need nursing care might be someone from abroad. In our lives, there are times when we help others and times when we are helped by them. While there are various opinions, what we must not forget is the importance of having a heart that tries to understand and accept each other first, regardless of race or nationality.

5. Status of Residence

Foreigners living in Japan have undergone the necessary screening to obtain a status of residence before coming to the country. There are 29 different types of status of residence, categorized according to "the purpose for living in Japan."



I thought there was something called "working visa"!

就労が認められる在留資格（活動制限あり）	
在留資格	該当例
外交	外国政府の大使、公使等及びその家族
公用	外国政府等の公館に從事する者及びその家族
教授	大学教授等
芸術	作曲家、画家、作家等
宗教	外国の宗教団体から派遣される宣教師等
報道	外国の報道機関の記者、カメラマン等
高度専門職	ポイント制による高度人材
経営・管理	企業等の経営者、管理者等
法律・会計業務	弁護士、公認会計士等
医療	医師、歯科医師、看護師等
研究	政府関係機関や企業等の研究者等
教育	高等学校、中学校等の教員等
技術・人文知識・国際業務	機械工学等の技術者等、通訳、デザイナー、語学講師等
企業内転勤	外国の事務所からの転勤者
介護	介護福祉士
興行	俳優、歌手、プロスポーツ選手等
技能	外国料理の調理師、スポーツ指導者等
特定技能	特定産業分野（注1）の各業務従事者
技能実習	技能実習生

（注1）介護、ビルクリーニング、工業製品製造業、建設、造船・船舶工業、自動車整備、航空・船舶、自動車運送業、放送、農業、漁業、飲食料品製造業、外食業、林業、木材産業（令和6年3月29日閣議決定）

身分・地位に基づく在留資格（活動制限なし）	
在留資格	該当例
永住者	永住許可を受けた者
日本人の配偶者等	日本人の配偶者・妻子・特別養子
永住者の配偶者等	永住者・特別永住者の配偶者、我が国で出生し引き続き在留している妻子
定住者	日系3世、外国人配偶者の連れ子等

就労の可否は指定される活動によるもの	
在留資格	該当例
特定活動	外交官等の家事使用人、ワーキングホリデー等

就労が認められない在留資格（注2）	
在留資格	該当例
文化活動	日本文化の研究者等
短期滞在	観光客、会議参加者等
留学	大学、専門学校、日本語学校等の学生
研修	研修生
家族滞在	就労資格等で在留する外国人の配偶者、子

（注2）資格外活動許可を受けた場合は、一定の範囲内で就労が認められる。



Foreign residents are officially screened to live in Japan.

Living Together in our Community -About Trash-

We all talked about trash issues

※ This dialogue is a work of fiction based on interviews.



Recently, some people have been putting out household trash on weekends, mixing different types of trash into the plastic packaging bags, or not covering the trash properly with the nets. It's a real struggle because crows scatter the trash, making cleaning difficult, and leaving trash out is not hygienic. I suspect it might be the trash from foreigners living nearby. What do you think we should do?

Actually, I have always wondered why those nets were there. When I first came to Japan, I received so many papers that there might have been an explanation about trash, but I don't remember if anything was written about the nets. I might have been causing a nuisance without even realizing it.



I am someone who follows rules and manners. However, I feel anxious that might be seen as the "culprit" just because I am a foreigner. When there are foreigners who do the wrong thing, it feels as if all of us are being misunderstood as being bad, and that makes me sad



I think Japanese people are very faithful to rules. In my country, we also have rules for separating trash, but no one follows them. Therefore, some people might not even realize that not following the rules for separating trash causes a nuisance to others.



I have lived in Japan for over 10 years, but when I moved to Kitakyushu City, I was surprised that the trash rules were different. Even now, there are things I don't know how to dispose of, so in those cases, I throw them away as "household trash," but I thought I might be causing trouble. For example, regarding the things like frying pans and pots, I thought it was a waste because aluminum and iron can be recycled. If there is a special way to dispose of them, I would like to know.



I take my pots, frying pans, and milk cartons to the collection boxes at the Community Center. I was also told where there is a Community Center that collects old clothes, so I am planning to take some there soon.



I once consulted the Kitakyushu City Information Center for Foreigners of the Kitakyushu International Association. I was having trouble because I didn't know how to dispose of 3D printer ink, and a counselor inquired with the Environment Bureau of the Kitakyushu City Hall for me.



After listening to everyone's stories, I realized that I had assumed on my own that foreigners were not following the rules. I am sorry. It might just be that foreigners do not know the rules and are making mistakes, or it could be that Japanese people are the ones not following the rules. Either way, I want to properly inform everyone about the rules so that we can all live comfortably. Does anyone have any good ideas?



In my neighborhood, there is an apartment building where many foreigners live. I thought that everyone might not know the trash rules at first and might not be able to read Japanese, so I consulted with the Environmental Center. They put up a multilingual notice banner at the trash station for free. I would be happy if, in this way, our community gradually becomes kinder to everyone.



Living Together in our Community -Community Activities and Interaction-

We all talked about local community interaction

※ This dialogue is a work of fiction based on interviews.



I feel lonely in Japan because I have no family or acquaintances here. While searching on the internet, I learned about “*Chonaikai*” (Neighborhood Association). I have never been invited, so I wonder if foreigners are not allowed to join?
Are all of you members of a *Chonaikai*?

I am a member. When I was feeling apologetic, wondering if my child's crying was bothering the neighbors, I learned about the *Chonaikai* at the Ward Office. Once I became acquainted with the people in the neighborhood, they started greeting me, and my opportunities to greet them also increased. Now I feel more secure living here than before.



I am not a member because I am busy with work and don't have time to participate in local events. A colleague at my company became a *Chonaikai* president and said he attends meetings and creates announcement notices for local events. I can have conversations in Japanese, but I don't understand the Kitakyushu dialect or the terms used in the *Chonaikai*, so it seemed difficult.



I didn't used to be a member either. However, when I heard that things like local streetlights and trash stations are managed with *Chonaikai* funds, I decided to join to pay the membership fees. I don't participate in the activities, but during the recent heavy rain, someone from the neighborhood contacted me out of concern. I was scared because water was coming into my entrance, so being someone who lives alone, it was very reassuring. Now I feel as if my family has grown.



I don't know much about "*Chonaikai*", but I have some close neighbors. When I moved in, I went around to greet the neighbors. In my country, it is normal to give greetings after moving, but I was nervous about being accepted. Some were surprised at first, but I was relieved that everyone welcomed me warmly. The day after I went to greet her, the elderly lady next door said, "I used to have a vegetable garden, but I can't do it anymore, so you can use it if you like." Now, I have a small garden. I give the vegetables I harvest to her as well. She also gives me side dishes, and I think of her like my Japanese family.



The number of foreigners in the community has increased, so I would like to interact with them. Regardless of nationality, it is important for residents to communicate and understand each other. Even if they don't join the *Chonaikai*, it would be nice if they could participate in events like "*Mochitsuki*" (rice cake making) or cultural festivals. But I can't speak English, and I don't know if my Japanese will be understood by foreigners, so I don't know how to approach them.



Being approached makes me very happy. I can't speak English, so Japanese is fine. However, since my Japanese isn't great, I get nervous. Japanese spoken by locals is fast and full of words not in textbooks, making it difficult. When I try to speak politely to elders, I can speak even less. If there were a local Japanese class, I would love to go.



It takes courage for a foreigner to approach a Japanese person, but I was surprised that Japanese people feel the same. Since I am not used to Japanese, communicating requires a lot of mental energy and is tiring. That's why being with people from my own country is easier. But actually, I want to know about local festivals. If I could introduce my country and language to Japanese people, I would like to try. Interaction would be easier if people spoke in Plain Japanese and listened slowly.



Let's Connect Through Greetings

Greet the people you pass or meet. It might take courage to greet a stranger, but responding to a greeting is good manners for both Japanese and foreigners. A greeting is the first step to becoming friends. Greeting someone in their own language can quickly close the distance between you.

First, in Japanese

Many Foreigners living in Japan are more proficient in Japanese than in English. Start with simple greetings like "Good morning" or "It's a nice day".

こんにちは！(Konnichiwa)
Kyoo wa samui desu ne.
(It's cold today, isn't it?)



こんにちは！(Konnichiwa)
Samui deu ne.
(It sure is cold.)

相手の言語で

If you know someone's native language, why not try greeting them in it? People are delighted when greeted in their own language, and it might just spark a great conversation.

Hello!
Genki desu ka?
(How are you?)



Hello!
Hai, genki desu!
Kaimono desu ka?
(Yes, I'm fine.
Going shopping?)

They used English!
So happy they care
about my country!

日本語	こんにちは	元気？	いいね！	ありがとう	またね
ベトナム語	Xin chào シンチャオ	có khoẻ không? コクエコン？	Thích! ティック！	Cảm ơn カム オン	Hen gặp lại ヘンガップライ
中国語	你好 ニーハオ	你好吗？ ニーハオマ？	很好！ ヘンハオ！	谢谢 シエシエ	再见 ザイ ジェン
ネパール語	नमस्ते ナマステ	सन्चै हुन्छ? サンチャイ？	त्यो त राम्रो भयो! ラムロ！	धन्यवाद ダンネバード	फेरि भेटौंला フェリ バトゥラ
インドネシア語	Selamatsiang. スラマツシアン	Apa kabar? アパカバール？	bagus! バグース！	Terima kasih. テリマカシ	Sampai jumpa. サンパイジュンバ
フィリピン語	Magandang araw. マガンダン アラウ	Kumusta ka? クムスタカ？	Nice! ナイス！	Salamat. サラマツ	See you. スィーユー
ミャンマー語	မင်္ဂလာပါ ミンガラパー	နေကောင်းပါသလား ネーカウンバー デーラー？	ကောင်းတယ်! カウンデー！	ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါသည် チエーズーティン バーデー	သွားတော့မယ် トアドーメー
英語	Hello ハロー	How are you? ハウアーユー？	great!/ nice! グレイト!/ ナイス！	Thank you サンキュー	See you. スィーユー
タイ語	男性: สวัสดีครับ サワディーカップ 女性: สวัสดีค่ะ サワディーカー	男性: สบายดีไหมครับ サバーイディーマ イカップ？ 女性: สบายดีไหมค่ะ サバーイディーマ イ？	ดี ディー！	男性: ขอขอบคุณครับ コープクンクラッ プ 女性: ขอขอบคุณค่ะ コープクンカー	เจอกันใหม่ ジャーガンマイ

Community Centers and Neighborhood Associations (*Chonai-kai*)

Community Centers are for everyone in the area.

Kitakyushu City established them for residents to build "their own town with their own hands," regardless of nationality.

Rooms are available for hobbies (singing, exercise, cooking, etc.), consultations (childcare, daily life), social exchange, and volunteering.

Centers host sports, festivals, and workshops. They are used for community meetings and serve as evacuation shelters during disasters like typhoons and heavy rains.

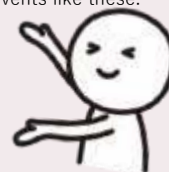
Neighborhood Associations (*Chonai-kai*) are "mutual aid" groups where residents work together to make the area a better place through cleaning, weeding, festivals, and safety patrols. Fees fund the management of local garbage stations and streetlights.

Joining helps you get to know your neighbors, making it easier to help each other in times of need.



<https://www.ktqc01.net/mina/ydcc/>

In Yoshida, you can
Join events like these:



Spring Apr – Jun
•Cherry Blossom (Ohanami) Walking Event
•Firefly Watching Party
•Yoshida Fureai Disaster Prevention Festival

Autumn Sep – Nov
•Canoeing Experience
•Yoshida River Cleaning
•Matsuri Yoshida (Yoshida Festival)
•Hot Fureai Yoshida Festival

Summer Jul-Aug
•Children's Summer Festival

Winter Dec-Mar
•Colorful Foliage Walking
•Yoshida Fureai Mochitsuki (Rice-cake Making) Festival



<https://www.ktqc01.net/mina/yscc/>

In Yokoshiro, you can
Join events like these:



Spring Apr – Jun
•Spring Walking Events
•City Beautification Campaign
•Yokoshiro Disaster Prevention Challenge
•Ground Golf Tournament

Autumn Oct – Dec
•Yokoshiro Lantern Festival
•Yokoshiro Fureai Cultural Festival
•Ground Golf Tournament

Summer Jul-Sep
•City-wide Night Patrol
•Human Rights Concert
•Sport Blowgun Tournament
•River & Town Cleanup Campaign

Winter Jun-Mar
•New Sports Tournament
•Discon (Disk Control) Tournament
•Sakura Walking Event

Community Center Operating Hours

Monday – Friday:
9:00am – 10:00am
※Closing times may vary
depending on the center.

Saturday:
9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Closed:
Sundays, National Holidays,
and Year end/New Year
holidays (Dec 29 – Jan 3)

Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●Activity Overview

2025

July 28 (Mon)

Discussing the current status and challenges of Yoshida District.

August 10 (Sun)

Participation in "Matsuri Yoshida"
(Cancelled due to heavy rain).

October 22 (Wed)

Interview with foreign residents.
First meeting with Tobata Tekko Co., Ltd.

November 2 (Sun)

Foreign residents participating in the
"Disaster Prevention Festa."

November 22 (Sat)

Social exchange between Japanese and foreigners,
introduction of the Community Center, and
Participation
in the Kitakyushu International Association event.

2026

January 4 (Sun)

Community exchange event: New Year BBQ Party.

February 1 (Sun)

Community exchange event: Vietnamese Tet Festival
in Yoshida.



●Interviewees:



Ms. Iwao Yoshiko
Director,
Yoshida Community
Center

Ms. Chiwaki Kokone
(University student)
Japanese resident



Mr. Vinh, Ms. Ha, Mr. Hung
(Tobata Iron Works)
Foreign residents



Mr. Oguchi Chikara
Chairperson, Yoshida School District
Community Development Council



Mr. Okinaga Takashi, Mr. Noda Kazuya
Tobata Iron Works

Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●What was the situation before you started this initiative?



The Yoshida Community Center once held classes to exchange with foreigners, but staff and director changes stopped them. Locals say trash disposal advice and bicycle commute greetings improved things. However, there was no way to contact them directly or build a lasting connection.

In Yoshida District, we've known foreign residents live here from neighbor's stories. Seeing them enjoy soccer in parks or interacting with local children felt natural. However, some residents still harbored anxiety or prejudice due to a lack of understanding.



●What was it like interacting with the foreign residents?



This was my first time speaking with Technical Intern Trainees and Specified Skilled Workers. As a Japanese-only speaker, I was worried, but those fears quickly vanished. I was relieved to see them studying Japanese so hard; we understood each other by speaking slowly. Many locals may feel a "wall" or anxiety about talking with foreigners. Despite age or cultural differences, I truly felt the most important thing is simply trying to have a conversation.

Having hosted homestays and interacted with people from abroad, I found this exchange very enjoyable. However, I also realized that closing the gap between locals and foreign neighbors requires time and patience—it cannot be solved overnight



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~



●Please tell us about yourself, Kokone-san

I have lived in Yoshida since childhood. I study Japanese culture, focusing on modern novels. As a student in the Dept. of Comparative Culture at the University of Kitakyushu, I also compare Japan with other world cultures. I joined these international exchange activities hoping to apply what I learn here to my studies.



●How was interacting with the foreigners in the District?

I was surprised to find some Technical Intern Trainees live in my neighborhood! We bonded over our shared love for Japanese anime, which is very popular in Vietnam. Knowing the anime I'm into is loved worldwide made me so happy. I wanted to talk more, but we ran out of time, so I definitely want to meet and interact with them again.



●What kind of activities would you like to do in the future?

Our community has many events year-round, but we face a shortage of staff. If residents not only participate but also serve as staff, it will increase our community's value beyond nationalities. We hope for your active participation as we work to create a welcoming environment for everyone.



We want them to feel at home! First, we hope they will participate in local events to deepen bonds with residents. As a next step, we want to continue this journey—perhaps by having foreign residents and students join us in building our community. We hope to keep this connection going in many forms.

Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●Please tell us about yourselves.



My name is Vinh. I am from Vietnam, and I've been in Japan for six years. I love sushi, traveling, and stock market investing. Before coming here, I thought Japanese people might be strict or distant in such a developed country. However, everyone I've met so far has treated me with great kindness and friendliness.

My name is Hung. I am from Vietnam and am 19 years old. I have been in Japan for nine and a half months. I enjoy listening to music, and my favorite foods are sweets. When I was in high school, I learned through the internet that Japan is a beautiful and quiet country. Since I like quiet places, I decided to come to Japan.



Nice to meet you. My name is Ha. I am from Vietnam and have just been in Japan for three years. My hobby is listening to music, and my favorite Japanese dish is Udon. Before coming to Japan, I thought it was a very beautiful country, and I really wanted to visit many different places here.



●How was interacting with the local residents?



Since the barbecue on January 4th was right during the New Year holidays, I felt like we were all one big family, and it made me very happy.

I had a wonderful time. My impression is that Japanese people are very cheerful, sociable, and proactive. Let's have another exchange event at the Community Center soon. I hope everyone will come and join us!



I was nervous at first, but it gradually became more fun. I'm so glad I participated because I had the chance to meet so many Japanese people

●A final word from you, please.

If you see us around town, please feel free to say hello!
It's perfectly fine to speak to us in Japanese.
We look forward to seeing you again!



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●Please tell us about foreign hiring at Tobata Iron Works.



It started when recruiting Japanese staff became difficult. Starting with Indonesians, then Vietnamese, and are now on our 12th group. They have a strong "hungry spirit" and even outperform Japanese staff. Since they are so capable, it is a challenge when they must return home after their 3-year internship.

In the past, interns mainly worked hard for three years, including overtime, to earn money. However, since the "Specified Skilled Worker" system allowed for longer stays, their mindset shifted toward learning Japanese to stay in Japan longer. Their awareness of improving their language skills is also changing.



Among those who returned home last time, some wanted to stay under the "Specified Skilled Worker" status but couldn't pass the exam due to insufficient language skills. Therefore, this time, we want to confirm their desire to transition early on and provide them with opportunities to study Japanese so they can stay with us. Companies like ours will rely more on foreign staff in the future, so we believe we must thoughtfully plan for the acceptance of Specified Skilled Workers.



●How did you feel about participating in the community exchange?

I was surprised by how adaptable the interns are! At the company, they tend to speak Vietnamese since they are with their compatriots. However, in an exchange like this, having elderly residents proactively speak to them in Japanese helps them improve their language skills and learn about Japanese culture. They looked like they were having so much fun, and I'm truly glad they had this opportunity.



Honestly, I was surprised. Elderly residents were very open, treating interns like their own grandchildren. Even if interns understood only half, they listened intently. I was amazed to see a side of them they don't show at work—it was wonderful to see them bond so naturally.



They also want to interact and visit various places. However, it's hard for them to take action or reach out to others on their own. As a company, it's difficult for us to step into their private lives, so having these opportunities for community exchange is very much appreciated.



One thing we all have in common is sports! They often play soccer and badminton. They even made their own ping-pong table to play! Also, as Japanese residents, we would like to know more about them, so I hope there will be opportunities for them to introduce the country and culture of Vietnam to us.



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

～Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward～



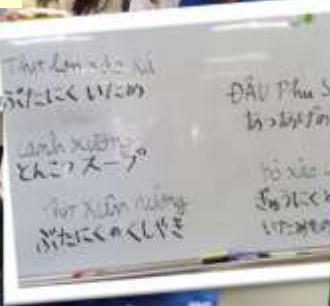
Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yoshida School District, Kokuraminami Ward~



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yokoshiro School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●Activity Overview

2025

July 22 (Tue)

Discussing foreign resident interaction
Planning Meetings (1-2 times a month)

July 31 (Thu)

Kick-off meeting with Iwanaga Kogyo, Inc. and
Keishukan, Inc

September 27 (Sat)

Yokoshiro International Exchange Farm Open
(Active ongoing)

October 11 (Sat)

"Yokoshiro Lantern Festival"
Volunteering and Participation

November onwards

Researching Foreign Resident Connections

2026

January 20 (Tue)

Community Exchange Event:
"International Udon Night"



●Interviewees:



Ms. Masumoto Junko
Director,
Yokoshiro Community
Center

Mr. Zyril, Mr. Rheyman
(Keishukan, Inc.)
Foreign residents

Ms. Yano Kaori
(Kitakyushu International
Association)
Japanese resident



Mr. Iwanaga Toru
President,
Iwanaga Kogyo, Inc.



Yokoshiro Elementary School

Ms. Higo Yoko
Teacher,
Yokoshiro Elementary School



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yokoshiro School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●Please tell us the background of this project



For a long time, we at the Community Center had wanted foreign residents to feel just as welcome to use our facilities as Japanese residents. In particular, we wanted to inform them that the center serves as a shelter during disasters and acts as a consultation desk that can connect them to various support services. However, we didn't know where to start. Furthermore, through daily conversations with visitors, I realized that a certain number of people held prejudices against foreign residents. I felt strongly that this was an issue we could not ignore.

I have worked in citywide support for foreign residents as a multicultural social worker for years. However, I suddenly realized that I knew nothing about them living in my own neighborhood, the Yokoshiro School District. So, one day at the Community Center, I asked Director Masumoto about our connections with local foreign residents. My family and I often visit the center as I also volunteer there, but that might have been the first time I ever spoke about my professional work.

To my surprise, she told me, "Actually, we've been wanting to establish a point of contact with foreign residents, too." At that moment, I felt that as a resident, I wanted to do something to help.



I was worried about how to build "face-to-face relationships" between residents of the same community, and that was exactly when Ms. Yano told me about a project by the Kitakyushu International Association. At the time, it was just a casual chat with her after her volunteer work, so I later put together a proposal for activities that seemed feasible for the Yokoshiro School District and consulted her again.

●What did you start with first?

Even at the Kitakyushu International Association, we don't always know exactly where every foreigner lives or which companies and schools they belong to. Therefore, relying on various connections, we visited local companies to hear their thoughts. Among them, we found companies that were positive about community exchange. With their permission, I invited the Director, saying, "Let's go talk to them together."



Since we had no prior connection with foreign residents in Yokoshiro, we were very grateful for the support of the Kitakyushu International Association in helping us connect with companies that understood the purpose of our activities. They introduced us to Iwanaga Kogyo, Inc. and Keishukan, Inc., so I drafted a proposal for "Exchange Activities based at the Community Center" and visited the presidents of those companies to introduce myself and explain the plan. Having the Association accompany me was very encouraging.



At the same time, we created an awareness-raising video for "Promoting Multicultural Community Building" and began broadcasting it in the public hall.



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yokoshiro School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●What were the key efforts?



So far, we have held "Exchange through Vegetable Cultivation in Planters" and "Exchange through Community Events (Yokoshiro Lantern Festival)." At the very beginning, we had everyone—both Japanese and foreign residents—use self-introduction cards to get to know each other, followed by an orientation to familiarize them with the Community Center. Additionally, to help regular visitors know that these foreign residents live in the same district and are active at the center, we created a signboard featuring everyone's photos.

●What made the strongest impression?



First, after we finished sowing the vegetable seeds, some foreign residents noticed that Ryukyu morning glory vines from an adjacent vacant lot had become tangled in the Community Center's fence. They took the initiative to clean them all off. It made me so happy. Second, during the opening ceremony of the Yokoshiro Lantern Festival, the foreign volunteers were introduced right after the official greetings. It was a precious opportunity for the many gathered residents to get to know them.



●How did you feel about the "Multicultural Community Building at the Community Center" plan?

In elementary schools, children from various backgrounds attend, and the number of foreign children seems to be increasing. I've met children who struggled to communicate despite speaking Japanese, leading to misunderstandings, or quiet children who would only give a small smile during lunch break. Because of these experiences, when I learned about the exchange efforts at the Yokoshiro Community Center, I really wanted to participate to better understand people from other countries.



●How was growing vegetables together and participating in the Lantern Festival?

Everyone was so bright and cheerful, working efficiently on the soil and planting. They are wonderful people. The self-introductions were fun and seeing them work so hard during the festival preparations—never shying away from heavy lifting—motivated me to work hard too, despite my age! The local residents greeted them warmly, and there was a very nice atmosphere overall.



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yokoshiro School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●Please tell us about yourselves.



My name is Zyril. I am 30 years old. I came to Japan from the Philippines about nine months ago. My favorite Japanese foods are karaage (fried chicken), ramen, udon, and yakiniku. I look forward to getting to know you.

My name is Rheyamar. I am 29 years old and from the Philippines. I came to Japan ten months ago. My favorite foods are udon and ramen. I look forward to getting to know you.



●What is your impression of Japan?



Before coming here, I imagined Japan as a safe country with advanced technology and very good manners. After actually arriving, I found that it is exactly as I had imagined.

●Why did you decide to work in Japan?

Coming to Japan has always been my dream. Ever since I was a child, I've loved Japanese anime like "Doraemon" and "Slam Dunk," and I always wanted to visit. I am very grateful that Keishukan, Inc. hired me after the interview. At work, I do "katawaku" (formwork) construction, and I absolutely love it. I want to improve my skills here and eventually do this same work back in the Philippines.



●How was the experience of interacting through vegetable cultivation?



I learned so much because they taught me every single step of the process, such as mixing fertilizer to prepare the soil and soaking the soil with water before planting the seeds. I want to try growing vegetables this way even after I return to the Philippines. I was also very happy to be able to participate in activities with everyone in the community. It was so much fun, and I felt that both children and adults were helping each other.



Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

~Yokoshiro School District, Kokuraminami Ward~

●How was volunteering at the Yokoshiro Lantern Festival?

I had a wonderful time. I was in charge of transporting sand with a wheelbarrow and filling paper lanterns before lining them up. Both adults and children listened carefully, and everyone was united as one. What especially touched me was that age, wealth, or social status didn't matter. I felt everyone was equal. Moreover, people treated me with kindness, regardless of being a foreigner. It was a great experience where I learned so many things.



●A final word from you, please.

We want to become even closer with everyone in the community. Since we are not very good at speaking Japanese yet, it is often difficult for me to interact even when we want to. If there were a Japanese language class nearby, we would love to attend. We want to improve my Japanese so that we can communicate more effectively.



●Please tell us about foreign hiring at Iwanaga Kogyo, Inc.

We began accepting technical intern trainees about ten years ago due to labor shortages. Currently, we employ staff (from the Philippines and Vietnam) under both "Technical Intern Training" and "Specified Skilled Worker" statuses. Our connection with the Kitakyushu International Association started when we consulted them about Japanese language education for our interns.



●How did you feel about the community exchange?

Our foreign staff are working very hard. Since they are young and physically strong, we had been looking for ways they could be of help to the community. When Director Masumoto from the Community Center proposed the idea for an exchange project with local residents, we decided to give it a try.



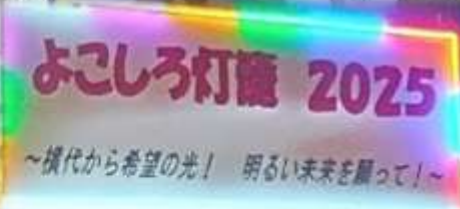
Community Exchange Initiatives in Action

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Yasashii Nihongo (Plain Japanese) and Translation Apps

“Yasashii Nihongo” (Plain Japanese) is simple Japanese that is easy for everyone to understand. It involves using simpler words and shorter sentences. This is helpful for communicating with foreign residents, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Key Points of “Yasashii Nihongo”

Point 1: Speak simply

① Use simple words

× kinyu suru (fill out)

○ kaku (write)

× irasshate kudasai

(We would be delighted to have you.)

○ kite kudasai (Please come)

② Limit the use of dialects

× kore, kaitotte. (Get this written down, y' all)

○ korewo kaiteoite kudasai
(Please write this down.)

③ Avoid Onomatopoeia and Mimesis

× amega zaazaa futteiru
It's "splashing" rain! /
It's raining "zaa-zaa".

○ amega takusan futteiru
It is raining hard.



Point 2: Speak clearly

① Avoid ambiguous expressions

× fukuro daijobudesu
(The bag is "okey" [meaning no])

○ fukurowa irimasen (I don't need bag)

② Finish your sentences

× ochawa? (Tea...?)

○ ochawo nomimasuka?
(Would you like to drink some tea?)



Point 3: Keep sentences short

Break long sentences into short

Tip!

Using “~desu” and “~masu” helps Japanese learners understand more easily.



× raigetsu omatsuriga arunyakedo, misemo ippai dete tanoshike, isshoni ikanne?
(Festival next month with tons of food stalls! It'll be a blast-wanna come along?)

○ raigetsu, kouennde matsuriga arimasu. (There is a festival at the park next month.)
misega takusan arimasu. (There are many stalls.) totemo tanoshiiidesu. (It is very fun.)
yokattara isshoni ikimasennka? (Would you like to go together?)

If communication is difficult, translation apps can help.
Using Plain Japanese reduces translation errors.

GoogleTranslation

No install
(App available)



VoiceTra Mobile App



VoiceTra QR
AppStore(jp)
20191023



VoiceTra QR
GooglePlay(jp)
20191023



Kitakyushu City Information Center for Foreigners



● Consultation Desk for Foreigners

24 Languages available: English, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc.

You can consult about anything, such as daily life, work, or your child's school. Assistance is available in Plain Japanese, English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other languages. Please do not worry alone—feel free to contact us first.



We also welcome inquiries from Japanese residents, such as those wishing to consult on behalf of a foreign acquaintance, community centers or *Chonaikai* planning multicultural initiatives, and anyone who wants to learn more about multicultural coexistence.



○ Consultation & Support Provided in Coordination with Specialists

•Immigration, Residency, and Visa Procedures: Consult with an Administrative Scrivener (Gyoseishoshi), an expert in administrative procedures.

(2nd Saturday, 1:00pm–4:00pm *Reservation required if an interpreter is needed)

•Legal Consultation: Consult with a lawyer about issues such as housing, marriage, or labor problems.

(4th Saturday, 1:30pm–4:30pm *Reservation required)

•Psychological Counseling: Consult with a Clinical Psychologist.

(Please contact us for dates and times *Reservation required)



● Multilingual Information

We provide administrative and daily life information in multiple languages to ensure foreign residents can live safely and securely in Kitakyushu City.



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● Interpretation Services

We dispatch interpreters free of charge to public institutions in Kitakyushu City, such as ward offices and elementary/junior high schools.

※Not available for events or personal matters.

Service Hours Mon. – Fri. (9:30–16:00)
Closed on Saturdays, Sundays, national holidays, and New Year holidays.

Phone ☎ 080-6445-2606

Address COM City 3F, 3-15-3 Kurosaki,
Yahatanishi-ku, Kitakyushu-shi

(Inside the Kitakyushu
International Association)





For Japanese and Foreign Residents

Community Exchange Handbook

～Building a Cohesive Society through Kindness～

Issued in February 2026

Published by: Kitakyushu International Association (KIA)

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This handbook was funded by the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) under the "Project to Promote Multicultural Community Building."