

Introduction

The Asia Pacific Women Journalists Exchange Program, a program launched in 2016 by the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, aims to promote friendship and mutual trust between Japan and Asia Pacific countries through holding symposiums and offering platforms for international exchange inviting “bridge women,”* highlighting contributions they have made to mutual exchange between Japan and the Asia Pacific region.

*Note: Bridge women refers to women who know both Japan and their respective countries and make contributions to both.

In FY 2019, with a focus on women in the media industry, especially women journalists, we invited 33 media workers of which 20 are from 11 different countries (China, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand) and 13 from Japan to take part in the three-day program comprising a symposium, visits, and discussions, and had them interact with one another.

The theme of this year’s exchange program was “Hasshin!” Hasshin is the Japanese term that has two meanings: “takeoff” and “sending out messages.” We expect this exchange program helps women journalists to step forward and take off and send out their messages based on inspirations and awareness that they gained through this experience. We are convinced that, through their “Hasshin,” they will build the bridge to strengthen friendship and mutual trust between Japan and Asia Pacific countries.

This report contains many comments made during the symposium, visits and discussions on various gender issues, as well as what they as journalists can do to address the issues. Based on the issues surrounding women in the media industry that were revealed through this program, the Gender Equality Bureau will formulate the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality.

We hope this report will provide inspiration and guidance to those who work in the media now, those who seek to work in the media in the future, and those who are interested in the role of the media for addressing gender issues.

Objectives of the Asia Pacific Women Journalists Exchange Program and its Report

This report summarizes the outcome of the exchange program in FY 2019 conducted as the “Asia Pacific Women Journalists Exchange Program” by the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, to disseminate the results to the world.

Since 2016, the Asia Pacific Women Exchange Program has been conducted to promote mutual trust and friendship between Japan and Asia Pacific countries from women’s perspective through holding symposiums and offering platforms for international exchange, highlighting activities of women who have contributed to building a bridge between Japan and the Asia Pacific region.

In FY 2019, which is the fourth year, the program was implemented with a focus on women journalists who work in the media industry, which has a major influence on public awareness and society. Throughout the program, participants who work in the media discussed the importance of women’s empowerment and exchanged diverse views on their future career and prospects. They were also encouraged to disseminate their findings gained through this exchange program to the world from the perspective of woman living in the Asia Pacific region so as to promote mutual understanding among countries and enhance networking among women journalists.

This report presents the outcomes of survey results. Please note that it does not necessarily express official positions of the Government of Japan. To describe the participants’ comments as accurately as possible, the report includes colloquial expressions in a few parts. The professional affiliations and titles of the women journalist participants are as of December 2019, the time of the exchange program.

All the activities of this program, including the preparation of this report, were planned and implemented under the guidance of the Project Advisory Committee, whose members are listed below.

Chair: Dr. HAYASHI Kaori Professor of Media and Journalism Studies at the Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, the University of Tokyo

Committee Members:

- Prof. OTO Yoshihiro Professor at the Department of Journalism, Faculty of Humanities, Sophia University
- Ms. JIBU Renge Freelance journalist, Visiting fellow of the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies at the University of Tokyo
- Mr. TASE Kazuo President and CEO, SDG Partners, Inc.
- Dr. TANAKA Tohko Professor at the Department of Communication and Culture, Faculty of Language and Literature, Otsuma Women’s University