

# Minato Internationalization Master Plan

FY 2015 – FY 2020

港区国際化推進プラン 2015年度～2020年度

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Minato City

## International Exchange Organizations and Corporations in Minato City

Minato City is home to embassies of 81 countries, as well as international corporations and organizations including international schools and foreign corporations. In particular, international exchange organizations from the private sector, such as incorporated non-profit organizations (NPO), are making significant contributions to the promotion of international exchange in the city.

Tokyo has been selected as the host city for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, and there is heightened interest in international exchange around the world. In light of these factors, there is a need to strengthen collaboration between Minato City and the international organizations, as well as among these organizations, in order to further promote internationalization in the city.

The organizations and corporations introduced in this section are playing an active role in international exchange across a wide range of fields. Although each organization launched their initiatives for different reasons, they have all actively kept up their activities while constantly considering how to enhance mutual understanding, with the aims of serving as a bridge between Japan and the world, and facilitating mutual understanding of cultures between countries.

The members of these organizations have spoken about the various hard work and difficulties they have faced in their activities to date. On the other hand, the activities that they have succeeded in carrying out only because they are NPOs and private-sector organizations are imbued with brilliant creativity and ideas, and there are many things that we can learn from these organizations going forward.

On this occasion, we interviewed members from five organizations. While we should have spoken to members from even more organizations, the number has been narrowed down to five due to space limitations. Despite the limitations, each of the organizations that we interviewed provided us with rich hints and suggestions. We hope that this set of Reference Materials will be useful to many organizations and individuals as they engage in international exchange initiatives in the future.

Last but not least, we would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for members of the organizations and corporations who took time out from their busy schedules to grant us the interviews.

- Incorporated NPO, Ookinaki MUSIC SPACE
- Incorporated NPO, International Artists Center
- Incorporated NPO, NAGOMI VISIT
- Japanese Language Class Sakura-Kai
- Hotel Okura Tokyo

# “Eating Rice Out of the Same Pot” in Home Visits

- Realistic International Exchange Eventually Changes Society -

## **Representative Director of Incorporated NPO, NAGOMI VISIT, Megumi Kusunoki**

The incorporated NPO, NAGOMI VISIT, has come up with a unique home visit model where foreign tourists are invited to homes for meals. It is engaged in organizing these visits.

### **A new style of home visits, originating from the founder’s personal experience**

Kusunoki had originally been involved in promotion work targeted at foreign visitors to Japan. In 2009 when she visited Denmark, she had the opportunity to have a meal at the home of an acquaintance. She found the experience of the ordinary lives of the Denmark people very enjoyable and interesting, and came up with the idea of providing foreign visitors to Japan with a similar experience. In September 2011, together with a friend, she began operating the unique home visit initiative of surrounding travelers from around the world with company at the dining table.

In this initiative, both the receiving host and the visiting guest first submit applications through the website. Those who register to be hosts are first handed detailed materials about this initiative beforehand. The operator (NAGOMI VISIT) has created an environment for responding to questions at any time, and registration is only carried out after both sides have gained a mutual understanding of one another. Next, the matching of hosts and guests for the home visits is carried out in consideration of the preferences of both parties.

### **Empathy toward realistic exchanges**

Compared to typical homestays, the unique system of a two to three-hour exchange while having a normal meal together provides the opportunity for a lighthearted international exchange in the home for the host, and a similarly lighthearted but realistic experience of Japan for the guest. By literally “eating rice out of the same pot,” the system offers a realistic cross-cultural exchange experience. Such realistic cross-cultural exchanges give rise to empathic connections, and the number of registered hosts is on the rise. As of January 2015, the number of registered hosts stand at 374, while the number of participating guests from countries around the world exceeds more than 500 per year.

Many of the hosts have shown enthusiasm for hosting even more guests, through comments such as, “I gained a sense of closeness and familiarity to travelers in the city,” and “I have become more positive about exchange after succeeding in communicating even at the single-word level.”

### **Safe, secure, and enjoyable home visits**

In order to ensure that there are no barriers to the motivation to engage in exchanges, NAGOMI VISIT shows consideration for safety and security in various ways. For example, it puts effort into exchanging information and improving relationships before the visit through e-mail and SNS (and providing translation support where necessary), ensures that all the hosts have volunteer insurance policies, provides support on dietary restrictions, and provides attentive support for questions from hosts and guests. According to Kusunoki, “There are plans to expand host registration further, mostly to suburban cities.”

### **Ties that remain even after the home visits**

Although exchanges through “eating rice out of the same pot” are short international exchange experiences that last for only two to three hours, Kusunoki spoke about the importance of keeping up the exchange even thereafter. She says, “The exchange does not come to an end after receiving guests for two to three hours and having a good time during the visit. Rather, I believe the ties that remain even after the visits are the most important. After being received by their hosts, the guests end their travels and return to their home countries. However, most of them say that the ties have definitely remained through e-mails, SNS, and other means that are available to us today.” She adds, “I believe that our ultimate goal is to contribute to the creation of an even more global community through the development of interpersonal relationships.”

Keeping up these interpersonal ties and increasing the number of “connections” where people have mutual respect for one another can contribute to mitigating the problems of prejudice and discrimination between people from different countries. By deepening cross-cultural understanding, the mindset of society in general will undergo changes, and eventually lead to the realization of a multicultural society. This is the vision that NAGOMI VISIT has created as the goal of its activities.

**Incorporated NPO, NAGOMI VISIT: <http://nagomivisit.jp/>**