

JENESYS2025 Timor-Leste-Japan Japanese Language and Cultural Exchange (Dispatch Program of Japanese University Students) Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

A group of six Japanese university students visited Timor-Leste from March 10 to March 17, where they introduced the Japanese language and the cultural attractions of Japan to local communities, including Japanese language learners, thereby promoting mutual understanding of each other's cultures and languages.

In addition to school exchange activities and homestays, they conducted site visits to organizations such as PARC Interpeoples' Cooperation PARCIC and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Through these visits, they gained insights into the initiatives undertaken by Japanese organizations operating in Timor-Leste, as well as the broader framework of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Building on these experiences, they actively disseminated their learning and the appeal of Japan through social media and other platforms, while also working to strengthen networks aimed at fostering further friendship between Japan and Timor-Leste.

【Participants】 Total: 6 Japanese university students

【Location】 Dili, Timor-Leste 6

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Aug. 26 (Tue)	【Orientation】 First Joint Orientation 【Lecture】 “Welcome to ASEAN-JAPAN Centre” Joint implementation with FY2025 JENESYS ASEAN dispatch programs Lecturer: Mr. WATANABE Mitsuo, Tourism Exchange Team, ASEAN-Japan Centre (ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism)
Nov. 27 (Fri)	【Lecture】 Lecture on the Dispatch Country “History of JICA's Activities in Timor-Leste and ASEAN Membership” Lecturer: Mr. SHIRAISHI Takaaki, Timor-Leste Office, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Feb. 25 (Wed)	【Participant Briefing】

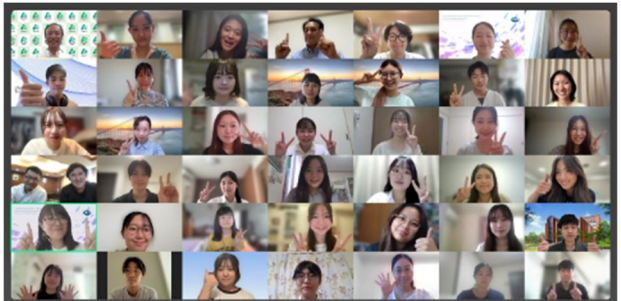
■ Dispatch Program:

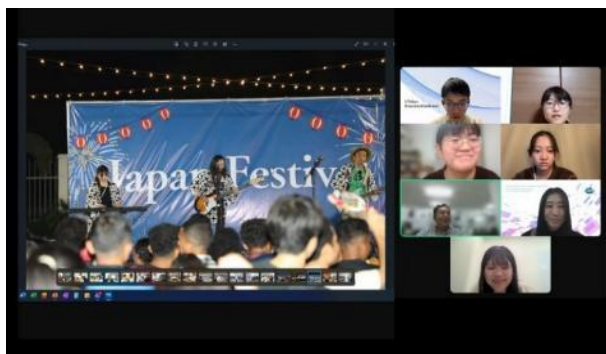
Mar. 10 (Tue)	【Pre-departure Orientation】 Departure from Narita International Airport Arrival at I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport (Denpasar, Bali)
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Mar. 11 (Wed)	Arrival at Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport (Dili) from I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport (Denpasar, Bali) 【Courtesy Call, Lecture】 “Timor-Leste and Japan” Lecturer: Ms. OTSUKA Nao, First Secretary, Embassy of Japan in Timor-Leste 【Exchange】 Exchange with JENESYS Alumni
Mar. 12 (Thu)	【Observation, Exchange】 JICA Timor-Leste Office - Office Tour, Exchange with National Staff - Site Visit to the Construction Site of Guido Valadares National Hospital - Observation of JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers' Activities (Guido Valadares National Hospital) 【School Exchange】 The National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL)
Mar. 13(Fri)	【School Exchange】 Quesadhip Ruak Center 【Observation】 PARC Interpeoples' Cooperation (PARCIC) 【Observation】 Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum
Mar. 14 (Sat)	【Observation】 Cristo Rei (statue of Jesus Christ), Santa Cruz Cemetery, Tais market, Mercado de Manleuana (market) 【Meeting with the Host Families】 【Homestay】
Mar. 15 (Sun)	【Homestay】 【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans)
Mar. 16 (Mon)	【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans Departure from Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport (Dili), Arrival at I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport (Denpasar, Bali)
Mar. 17 (Tue)	Departure from I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport (Denpasar, Bali) Arrival at Narita International Airport

2. Program Photos

Online Pre-study Program

	
August 26, 2025 【Lecture】 “Welcome to ASEAN-JAPAN Centre”	August 26, 2025 【Lecture】 Commemorative photo



November 27, 2025 【Lecture】 Lecture on the Dispatch Country “History of JICA’s Activities in Timor-Leste and ASEAN Membership”



February 25, 2026 【Participant Briefing】

Dispatch Program



March 11, 2026 【Courtesy Call, Lecture】 Embassy of Japan in Timor-Leste, 【Exchange】 Exchange with JENESYS Alumni



March 12, 2026 【Observation, Exchange】 JICA Timor-Leste Office



March 12, 2026 【Observation, Exchange】 JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers' Activities (Guido Valadares National Hospital)



March 12, 2026 【School Exchange】 The National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL)



March 13, 2026 【School Exchange】
Quesadhip Ruak Center



March 13, 2026 【Observation】
PARC Interpeoples' Cooperation (PARCIC)



March 13, 2026 【Observation】
Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum



March 14, 2026 【Observation】
Cristo Rei (statue of Jesus Christ)



March 14, 2026 【Observation】
Santa Cruz Cemetery



March 14, 2026 【Observation】
Mercado de Manleuana (market)



March 14 - 15, 2026 【Homestay】



March 14 - 15, 2026 【Homestay】

 March 16, 2026 【Reporting Session】	 March 16, 2026 【Reporting Session】 Group photo
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3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ University Student

As part of the pre-study program, my interest in the Tetum language has grown, and I am considering studying it before the program begins. I have also learned that Japanese martial arts are popular in Timor-Leste, and since I practice Aikido myself, I hope to build friendships with local people through Aikido.

◆ University Student

What has left a strong impression on me was the opportunity to engage with a wide range of people in Timor-Leste through activities such as homestays, NGO visits, and visits to government institutions. I was able to learn about the thoughts and perspectives of local people, as well as those working in Timor-Leste from various positions and backgrounds.

Through these experiences, I gained a deeper understanding of Timor-Leste and the bilateral relationship between the two countries from multiple perspectives.

◆ University Student

The homestay was the most memorable part of the program for me. Spending one night and two days with my host family allowed me to learn in depth about the character and daily life of people in Timor-Leste. It would have been difficult to gain such a deep understanding for an individual, and by staying together rather than simply making a home visit, I was able to build a close and meaningful bond with my host family.

◆ University student

I spoke with representatives from the Certified Specified Nonprofit Corporation PARC Interpeoples' Cooperation (PARCIC) about their international cooperation activities. I was particularly impressed by the story of how they transformed a coffee farm that had just become independent and lacked a solid foundation into one capable of providing employment for young people and supporting the rural economy. I was also amazed by their attitude of constantly thinking about and taking on the challenge of how to ensure farmers have year-round income—rather than simply focusing on coffee harvests—and how to improve the nutritional status of women and children. The coffee I drank while listening to their story tasted a little different than usual.

◆ **University student**

During a visit to an ODA site as part of an observation tour of JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers' activities, I learned about their efforts to work for hospitals that the people of Timor-Leste can continue to use for many years to come. It was impressive to see how they approach their work, constantly considering how to operate and build trusting relationships with local people—all while working in an environment where medical equipment is insufficient and facilities and sanitary conditions are not as well-developed as in Japan. I realized that rather than providing advanced medical care, it is important to understand the local situation and offer support starting with what is feasible.

4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ **Exchange School Faculty**

At first, the Japanese university students were worried about whether their Japanese would be understood and whether the Timorese students were enjoying themselves. However, through games and shared activities, they quickly connected and felt a genuine sense of mutual understanding.

The Timorese students expressed joy at realizing that their Japanese was understood by Japanese people and that they could understand spoken Japanese, which I felt became a strong motivation for their language learning. Many also experienced Aikido and calligraphy for the first time, deepening their interest in Japan. Even beyond language, being able to laugh and enjoy time together showed the value of this exchange in fostering mutual understanding and long-term grassroots peacebuilding.

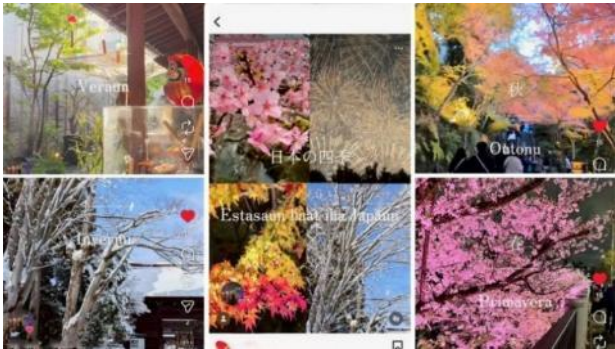
◆ **Exchange School Student**

Through this international exchange, I was able to experience different cultures and perspectives, which was very valuable for me. At first, I felt a bit nervous, but as the interaction continued, I became more comfortable communicating and really enjoyed the experience. I was especially impressed by learning about their daily life and culture. This experience also motivated me to study Japanese languages more seriously.

◆ **Host Family**

Hosting JENESYS participants was a truly meaningful experience for our family, filled with new discovery, laughter, and heartfelt connections. We visited lots of places and shared many memorable moments together, each place offered opportunities to reflect on history, enjoy nature, and create lasting memories. At home, a family dinner with my sister from the Embassy of Japan deepened our cultural exchange. We also enjoyed sharing Timorese culture by dressing them in traditional tais, playing Kendama with the children, and relaxing together at the beach with fresh coconut water. Through these shared experiences, they became part of our family. What began as hosting grew into genuine friendship, reminding us of the value of cultural exchange and human connection.

5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt), Articles, etc

	
February 5, 2026 (Instagram) Introducing Japan's four seasons through many beautiful images, including traditional and symbolic scenes, with explanations	February 21, 2026 (Instagram) Introduction to Japan: Onomatopoeia Onomatopoeia is used for imitating sounds or expressing states and feelings. Peko peko: Very hungry Waku waku: Feeling excited or looking forward to something Doki doki: Heart beating fast (nervous or excited) Niko niko: With a big smile Kira kira: Sparkling or shining Potsu potsu: Light rain Zaa zaa: Heavy rain
	
February 14, 2026 (Instagram) Introduction to Japanese Culture: Kimono Kimono is traditional Japanese clothing. It is not just fashion—patterns and designs have	March 15, 2026 (Instagram) 3/14-3/15 Homestay All of the host families welcomed us with such warmth and kindness, and we are truly grateful.

meanings. They can represent new beginnings, longevity, celebration, and good fortune, similar to tais, the traditional handwoven textile of Timor-Leste. Kimono is also sustainable. There is little waste, and it can be resized, re-dyed, or remade. It is a garment for a lifetime and can be passed down through generations.	The time we spent together has become a wonderful memory for us. Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts.
	
March 16, 2026 (Instagram) Sharing program highlights on Instagram.	March 22, 2026 (Instagram) Through JENESYS 2025, I visited Timor-Leste and experienced a culture very different from anything I had known before. The homestay was especially memorable, where I was warmly welcomed and dressed in traditional clothing made from tais, a precious experience I will never forget. Through exchanges with local universities and Japanese language schools, I was able to firsthand feel the current reality and energy of a country that is still developing. I was also fortunate to visit the only national hospital in Timor-Leste, where I was deeply struck by the differences compared to Japan. It was an extremely valuable experience. I am sincerely grateful to the five friends who shared and ran through this journey together. I hope to make the most of this experience and carry it forward into the future.



March 16, 2026 (Facebook page of the Department of International Relations, National University of Timor-Leste (UNT))

“JENESYS Exchange Program at the Department of International Relations”

On 12 March 2026, students from the Department of International Relations at the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e participated in the JENESYS cultural and academic exchange program. Six visiting students from Japan gave presentations on Japanese culture and society, while UNTL students shared their academic life and experiences.

The program provided a valuable opportunity for dialogue and intercultural exchange between young people from Japan and Timor-Leste. The Department of International Relations highly values such opportunities that promote international cooperation and global perspectives among students.



March 16, 2026 (Facebook page of JICA Timor-Leste Office)

“JENESYS-Japanese Students Visited JICA Office and HNGV”

On 13 March, six university students from Japan visited JICA office. After the office tour, the participants discussed about challenges differences between Japan and Timor-Leste with JICA national staff.

Following the visit, they moved to HNGV to observe the new hospital construction site and interacted with JICA Volunteers, gaining insight into the medical situation and challenges in Timor-Leste. JENESYS is a Japanese government program that promotes two-way youth exchange between Japan and Asia-Pacific countries, enabling participants to learn, deepen mutual understanding, and build friendships through cultural and academic experiences. Every year, young Timorese also visit Japan through the program.

6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Presentation by 1 group

		
【Results of the Program】 ◆ Learnings from the program Through this program, we gained a thorough understanding of Japan's long standing involvement in the development of Timor-Leste, particularly through infrastructure development and medical support, in which Japan has acted as a trusted partner. We were deeply impressed by Timor-Leste as a nation with a predominantly young population. During the exchange at the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL), we experienced students' strong energy and motivation to learn. Through the homestay experience, we also learned that Timor-Leste is a society with strong family and community ties. At the same time, we observed a strong Chinese presence in urban areas, which led us to recognize that Japan's initiatives and support may not yet be widely recognized by the general public. ◆ Learnings from "Japanese Language and Japanese Culture Exchange" At UNTL and Japanese language schools, we learned that many students aspire to study or work in Japan, and their high motivation to learn Japanese left a strong impression on us. However, we also realized that opportunities to access information about Japanese culture and study abroad programs, such as the MEXT scholarship, are limited. Students actively participated in cultural activities such as Aikido and calligraphy, demonstrating strong interest in Japanese culture. At the same time, the limited opportunities to experience Japanese culture firsthand highlighted the importance of creating continuous and accessible channels through which information about Japan and Japanese culture can be shared. 【Action Plan】 ▪ Taking local conditions into account, we will create simple, image focused social media posts to introduce Japanese student life, culture, and language, making information about Japan more accessible to young people in Timor-Leste. ▪ To raise awareness of Timor-Leste among young people in Japan, we will create a poster based on our experiences in the dispatch program. Once the poster is completed, we will, if possible, visit the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in Japan to seek advice and further refine its content. By presenting the poster at schools and other venues, we aim to increase interest in Timor-Leste within Japan. We believe that raising interest in Timor-Leste among Japanese people and encouraging more people to visit the country will help foster greater understanding and familiarity with Japan among the people of Timor-Leste.		

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)