

Training for Local Staff in Japan

Kanane Setlhodi

As a member of the local staff at the Embassy of Japan in Botswana, I was selected to attend a training program for local staff working at Japan's overseas missions. The program was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in Tokyo from 18th to 25th October, 2015. A total of 59 participants were selected from more than 5000 local staff members based on their merits.

I found the training to be highly informative and multi-dimensional, focusing on various areas that influence Japanese foreign policy. The lectures which were given covered thorough explanations on the role of Local Staff within Japan's Embassies as well as details of Japan's Public Diplomacy. There were also lectures covering the management of Information security in Embassies as well as International law guiding bilateral and multilateral relations. Country presentations were also made, providing an opportunity to share each Embassy's activities with other participants.



Country presentations of Embassy activities

The training also provided an opportunity to meet and interact with Mr. Yoji MUTO, State Minister for Foreign Affairs.



Meeting with Mr. Yoji MUTO, State Minister for Foreign Affairs

I found the training to also be a great opportunity to learn about Japanese culture and history. This included exposure to Japanese cuisine and etiquette and also visiting a number of historical places. A visit to a reputable restaurant at Meiji Kinenkan exposed participants to the art of enjoying a Japanese meal, including the use of utensils and proper conduct.



Enjoying Japanese Cuisine with other Members of Local Staff

As part of the training, we also visited some prominent historical places like the Great Buddha of Kamakura and the temple in Asakusa. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided participants with an opportunity to also undertake 'personal training' and explore Japan on their own. I took this opportunity to visit various areas within Tokyo, including the Imperial gardens, Shinjuku, Harajuku, and Ginza.

I found Japan to be very different to Botswana in terms of the high population of people concentrated in relatively small areas as well as the very high level of development. Despite the high population concentration, life in Japan seems very organized and the people are very polite. I also initially had concerns about getting around and communicating because I do not speak Japanese. I, however, did not experience any problems because of the clear communication in various places, including signposts of train stations and the general friendliness of Japanese people.



Visiting the Great Buddha of Kamakura



Visiting the Imperial Palace Gardens



A visit to Harajuku.

As part of the training, we also undertook some educational tours which included visits to the Parliament buildings/National Diet, Japan National Tourism Organization, the Japan Foundation and the National Museum of Emerging Science & Innovation. We even had an opportunity to visit the Tokyo Skytree which revealed the impressive architecture of Tokyo seen from above.



A visit to the Parliament Building

Overall I found Japan, Tokyo in particular, to be a very diverse place combining its old heritage with advanced technology. High rise buildings exist side by side with key monuments from the past like shrines. The country's history is well protected and well maintained.