

The 33rd START Program (Indonesia)

For a little over two weeks from August 13 to August 28, 2016, 24 first year undergraduate students took part in the 33rd START Program*. Led by Associate Professor Ayami Nakaya (Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation) and two other faculty members, the students went to Universitas Brawijaya (UB) in Malang, East Java, Republic of Indonesia.

At the Universitas Brawijaya, students had lessons on various topics given from a variety of angles aiming to improve their understanding of contemporary Indonesia. At the beginning, participants felt uneasy about the lessons being taught in English only but gradually gained confidence and started to voice their opinions, overcoming the fear of making grammatical mistakes. In addition, through the lessons they had the opportunity to learn about a culture, history, and society that are completely different from Japan, and were able to deepen their understandings of different cultures. Moreover, the students used the Indonesian they had learned at language lessons to enjoy local life while communicating with the local students.

In their free time after lectures, participants divided into pairs and partnered with a student from UB. Spending free time like this, talking and taking trips into town together, the students earnestly asked questions about anything they do not know by using their English and Indonesian, and occasionally Japanese and hand gestures.

Not only that, they had the opportunity to visit a local elementary school where they introduced Japanese traditional pastimes such as Origami (the art of folding paper into various figures) and Kendama (cup-and-ball game) in English and Indonesian. They also enjoyed singing Japanese songs together with the children.

KKN (Kurilah Kerja Nyata), or social contribution activities through homestay experience is one of the core purposes of this program. The participants visited a village about two hours away from Malang where UB is located and experienced local farm work such as harvesting. As most of their host families did not speak English, students' English-speaking partners from UB stayed in the same houses with them during the homestay period. The students were initially bewildered by aspects of the local lifestyle, such as food habits and bathroom facilities which are completely different from Japan. However, as they

were touched by the kindness of their host families each student gained unique and valuable experience. Additionally, on an optional tour they visited Mount Bromo where they were able to enjoy magnificent Indonesian scenery, the likes of which cannot be seen in Japan, and experienced the diversity and richness of Indonesian nature.

On the last day, participants made a presentation in English on the topics that they had started preparing for since before their departure (topic examples: comparison of medical circumstances, food processing, law systems, education systems, traffic problems, garbage collection and recycling). Their presentations were based on the investigations undertaken during their two-week stay, such as interviewing and collecting questionnaires from their host families, and students and teachers from UB. By achieving their target of giving a final presentation while tackling all the issues on global core competencies, the students were able to mentally and physically understand the meaning of this program. At the farewell party, they performed an old Japanese play and expressed their feelings of gratitude and reluctance to say goodbye to the local students and teachers to the last.

After returning to Japan, the students had a follow-up session and reflected on their growth in global core competency obtained through this START program. There was various feedback from the students about their respective experiences, including: "I was frustrated that I couldn't answer the questions in English", "I realized that I should not blame my circumstances for what I am" and "I felt the importance of being prepared". As seen above, their awareness of the importance of studying English and freely voicing their opinions has increased. Also, their experience of new culture and customs in a country with a large Muslim population gave them the opportunity to think about the diversity of religions. Because of this experience many of the participants are now thinking of studying abroad in the future.



Answering questions from the local students at the final presentation



Receiving a warm welcome at the local elementary school



Indonesian pronunciation class



Participants with their certificates of completion



A theatrical performance "Momotaro" was given in English at the farewell party. It provoked laughter from the teachers from UB.