

HI FROM SAGA

WINTER 2021 Vol.6



Introduction

Many events had to be cancelled due to the spread of COVID-19 these days. At Saga university, almost all of the classes were held online. More than 96 million cases have been confirmed globally and 350,000 in Japan today.

For this winter issue, We got this opportunity to interview some of the international students in Saga who managed to come to Japan during this pandemic. The interviews are below.

Name: Lulie
Country: Ethiopia



Q: When did you come to Japan?

In October. I stayed in Tokyo for two weeks for quarantine.

Q: Did you have to pay for the hotel for the quarantine?

No. I think it was covered by MEXT^(*) scholarship.

Q: How was the quarantine?

It was a little bit boring but okay. About food, we ordered from outside. And there were also some convenience stores, so we could go there and buy some foods.

Q: Why did you choose to study in Saga university?

I got my supervisor in Saga and we communicated each other like we developed my work together in my country so I decided to come to Saga. And it's a good university. It's a little bit small but there are many international students. I like the city too. It's a small city but we can explore by bike.

Q: What are you currently studying in Saga?

Currently I'm a research student and studying about tropical crops.

Q: How is your life in Saga?

I like it. I have a good tutor and good friends. It's early to say this but it's good and I'm still adapting.



online interview ↑

Q: Do you have any messages for Saga university students?

I want to meet everyone like I want to share cultures and interact with many students. I also want to thank everyone like when I went out, everyone I met was really nice to me.

We could make sure that things are really different now from what they used to be before this pandemic happens through this interview with him. Not being able to meet people, friends, families, and not being able to go out often surely make us frustrated everyday. Particularly these exchange students who came all the way from other countries to Saga may be feeling lonely in this different environment. We hope this pandemic will be over as soon as possible and hope to be able to hold international events again soon!

(*) The financial support was provided by MEXT and Saga University

Name: Donzala
Country : Burkina Faso (West Africa)



Q: Can you please introduce yourself?

Yes. I am Some Donzala David from Burkina Faso, West Africa. I came to Saga university as a research student (Ph.D). I arrived in Tokyo on the 10th of November and needed to do quarantine for two weeks. I could not go out anywhere during quarantine. Then I came to Saga on 25th of November.

Q: Where did you stay during quarantine and who paid for it? Japanese government, your government or Saga university?

I stayed at JICA' s facility. I didn' t need to pay anything.

Q: How is the situation of COVID-19 in your country?

When I was still there, the situation wasn' t too bad. But it became more dangerous around November 22nd because there was an election. People met up every day and people gathered to vote. I think that made the corona situation worse. In my opinion, it will get better soon because the election ended, and government presented some solutions.

Q: What brought you to Saga university.

Because Saga is not a capital or big city. I think living in countryside is easier like... to make friends is easier and I think I can have an enjoyable life. When I came to Saga university, my supervisor Hino-Sensei (Sensei is a form of address for a professor or a teacher in Japanese), made everything easier for me before I arrived. I' m very lucky. I think it is better to choose countryside. Saga was my top choice.

Q: What are you studying at Saga university?

I will study civil engineering at Hino Sensei' s laboratory as a Ph.D student. I already started Japanese class with Koga Sensei since last October. I' m not yet good but still trying.

Q: How is your life in Saga?

I think Saga is a lively city. I am enjoying my life in Saga. I got used to this condition. I mean wearing masks and keeping distance from people are a part of my habits now. For instance, if I forget to wear a mask and go out, I notice this immediately because the wind hits my nose. Then I quickly go back to get it.



online interview ↑

He showed us a charm he got from the Saga shrine during this interview and introduced us how he has been enjoying the life in Saga. He described using Japanese words he knows that he wants to experience Shinkansen someday. Burkina Faso is famous for its weathy nature. We are hoping that he will also like the nature here too.



Name: Erijon
country: Kosovo(Europe)

Q: Please tell us about your country a little bit?

Where are you from?

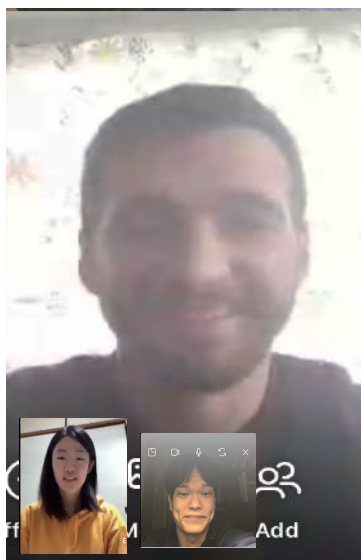
I'm from Kosovo. Kosovo is a small country and is located in southeast Europe in a region called Balkans. It's one of the youngest countries in the world. Kosovo was established in 2008. It's only around 13 years old. 90% of Kosovars are Albanians and we speak the Albanian language. Only 2 million inhabitants live there. About the size of country, I compared with Japan and I found Gifu prefecture is the same size as Kosovo.

Q: Did you have quarantine when you arrived in Japan?

Yes, actually I was supposed to come to Japan in April, and I had a plane ticket and prepared everything. I was going to leave Kosovo to Japan on 2nd of April. But by the middle of March, all of Europe started to do quarantine and all the flights from Europe are banned to Japan. So, my flight was cancelled. After that I got e-mails from the Japanese embassy every month, the e-mails said like all the flights were still closed. The e-mail that I got in July said I should wait until end of October, but it was still unsure. In September I finally got the information that I can travel to Japan and need to do quarantine for two weeks where I arrived before I use public transportation. So, I did quarantine in Tokyo for two weeks.

Q: Which exact date did you come to Japan.

23rd of October.



online interview ↑

Q: Did you pay for the hotel and foods during quarantine?

Yes, the receipts came after the quarantine.^(*) In the beginning, there was a company that was arranging all of that. About the food, we are not allowed to eat outside. We had two options, that we buy foods from convenience store in the hotel or order the room services. But room services are way too expensive, so I had to eat foods from the convenience store every day for two weeks.

Q: How is the situation of corona virus in your country?

It's quite bad. Officially there are maybe around 5% of whole population already tested and got positive results. But actually, there are much more infected people. There are a lot of people who can't take the test because of some reasons. For example, one or two people have corona in family and the other members of the family have symptoms. Then they don't go to the hospital and are considered as an infected person. So, if it's sure that they have corona, they are not allowed to take test because it's waste of test and they just do quarantine by themselves. So, I'm sure there are many infected people more than 5% of population.

Q: Why did you choose to come to Saga university?

I wasn't looking at university. I was just checking the programs. And I think the program of Saga university suited me the best.

Q: What are you studying in Saga university?

I'm trying to research structural engineering.

Q: How is your life in Saga?

Comparing with everywhere else, it's much better because the corona cases are so low, and everything is open. I heard everywhere else is lockdown. And people here are so nice.

We could get a precious information through this interview that there are more cases in Kosovo than they are announcing which made us aware that the information on the internet is not always telling truths. We learned that they had a war before the establishment of Kosovo so we were shocked because we Japanese cannot imagine such things are actually happening every day in this world.

Of course, we wanted to meet and interview in person but now we know that we can still learn enough via online meetings.

(*) The financial support was provided by MEXT and Saga University

Name: Yen
Country: Vietnam (Southeast Asia)



Q: Please introduce yourself!

My name is Yen. I'm studying Japanese at Saga University's Faculty of Education. I will stay in Saga for one year.

Q: When did you come to Japan?

I arrived in Tokyo last October. I came to Saga after two weeks of quarantine.

Q: How much did you spend during the quarantine period?

I received MEXT scholarship and it covered my hotel fees and meals during quarantine.^(*)

Q: What is corona's condition in Vietnam?

There are very few people infected in Vietnam now compared to Japan. There were only one infected person yesterday. Vietnam started prohibiting foreigners from entering the country early.

Q: What was your impression when you first came to Japan?

When I came to Japan from Vietnam, I felt the temperature in Japan was cold.

Q: Why did you choose Saga University?

I became interested because a Vietnamese senior who is studying abroad at Saga University introduced this university. My senior is still studying at Saga University to get their PhDs.

Q: You are good at Japanese, how long have you been studying Japanese?

I have been studying it for 4 years.

Q: Why did you decide to study Japanese?

After reading Doraemon and Detective Conan when I was a little kid.

As I kept studying Japanese, I learned a lot about Japan and I liked it.

Q: Do you have any dreams for the future?

I want to work at Japanese companies. Also, I would like to teach Japanese in Vietnam, but I think my first priority is to get a job at a Japanese company and gain a lot of experience in Japan.

Q: How is your life in Saga?

I haven't had face-to-face classes because of Corona, and I've been at home for many days taking online classes. I refrain from going outside as much as possible. However, I often go on campus, to do some documents and studying at the library. During the winter break, I went on a trip to Nagasaki to visit Peace Park, the Atomic Bomb Museum, and Chinatown. I ate a lot of Chinese food there.

Q: How is Saga compared to your home city Hanoi?

Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam, so Saga is very lively, different from where I come from.

Q: Which do you like better, urban or rural?

If you study, the countryside is good. That's why I like Saga. I think that the city is convenient when you go out with friends.

Q: What is your favorite thing about Saga?

Hot springs. I don't recall if it was Uresano or Takeo, but I went to a hot spring on the mountain the other day.

Q: Please give a message to saga university students!

I've already experienced a lot of things since I came to Saga, Japan. You can learn new things, and you can interact with local students a lot, such as this interview, so if you have a chance, you should visit Vietnam, visit other foreign countries, and experience a lot! It's a tough situation with Corona right now, but let's do our best!



online interview ↑

She answered us in very fluent Japanese. We are glad that Japanese Anime and Manga are also popular in Vietnam.

She is really lucky that she can spend time in Japan this year. We wish her all the best and hope that her dreams to work in Japan will come true.

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Name: Mustofa

Country: Indonesia (Southeast Asia)



Q: Please introduce yourself

A: Yes, my name is Mustofa from Indonesia.

I'm right now in Saga as a graduate student at Saga university major in electronic engineering. I actually got accepted by Saga university last year in around July, and I was going to start university in October here in Japan, however unfortunately I could not come in time due to COVID-19. But fortunately, I could come to Japan in November.

Q: Where did you stay during quarantine and who paid for the time?

I firstly arrived in Narita and stayed at a hotel for two weeks there for quarantine.

MEXT scholarship covered my expenses for flight tickets and the hotel, ^(*) but I needed to pay for meals and purchase the flight ticket from Narita to Saga by myself. I spent about 6 hours to do all the procedures at the airports. It was tough.

And since I'm a Muslim, we have some restrictions with foods. It was quite hard during quarantine. I was allowed to buy stuff only from a convenience store in the hotel so there were only two options that we eat only two types of Bentos. Those two weeks were painful.

Q: How is the situation of COVID-19 in where you come from?

A: The situation in Indonesia is so much worse than in Japan. It's been impacting our lives and fields. Before I came to Japan, I was working as a teacher at one of the universities in Indonesia but because of covid-19, I could not continue to work, and I needed to quit the job in March.

So, from March to November, I did nothing. I was just waiting until I become able to move to Japan.



online interview ↑

Q: What brought you to Saga university?

A: I was a SPACE-E student in 2017 for a year so I wanted to come back!

Q: What do you study in Saga?

A: I study electrical engineering, especially on solar panels at Mr. Tanaka's laboratory.

Q: How is your life in Saga?

A: I got used to living here. But I was surprised by climate change when I landed in Japan. I felt really cold because in Indonesia it was like 30°C but the weather suddenly became like 9°C. We rarely face the cold weather in Indonesia.

Q: It's your 2nd time in Saga. What do you like the most about Saga?

A: In 2017, when I came to Saga for the first time, I had no idea about Japanese cultures and habits. But as I kept learning Japanese language and more and more about Saga, I started to fall in love with Saga and I was always desperate to come back here again after going back to Indonesia.

Q: Do you think it's easier to live in a small city than living in a big city?

I don't know but I found it comfortable to live in Saga for learning. I think Saga is a good environment for students because it's not crowded so you can focus on studying. Also, Saga is really close to Fukuoka which makes it easier to go hanging out with my friends. I would say living in Saga is convenient because it's easier to access anything from here.

Q: Do you have any messages for students from Saga university?

Take care of yourselves. Be careful. You don't want to get coronavirus!

It's really difficult to make many friends in this situation so I hope to have some events soon that students can interact with international students!

It seems really tough just to think about eating same meals everyday for two weeks. But he could get over it so we are sure that he will be able to get over any difficult situations and have nice Saga life.

(*) The financial support was provided by MEXT and Saga University

In closing

Thanks to these international students, we had a chance to listen to the valuable stories. We are grateful to them for sharing their stories in the midst of the corona disaster. These days, I feel like we have only about 1/10,000 of the options that we had before, but let's get over these difficulties with taking some breaks with our own style.

The number of new corona infections in Japan has increased since the middle of November last year, reaching 3827 on Christmas day. Since then, the number of new infections has increased rapidly from around the end of the year to the beginning of the year, and January 8th had the highest number at 7882 infected people. The government issued a state of emergency to 11 prefectures on January 7th. As a result of this measure, the number of newly infected people has been declining since January 9th.

The Internet is full of various information nowadays, and it is difficult to sort out the information. Also, each person has a different sense of what is okay or not during this corona pandemic. We are in an era in which we have to think and decide by ourselves. Everyone might be patiently waiting to get back to normal life. At least, we should be kind to the people around us and work together to overcome this situation.

In this article, the two Japanese reporters were supposed to study abroad by now if it wasn't postponed or canceled...

Thank you for reading this newsletter! We hope everyone is staying safe! Look forward to the next issue!

Editors

Yomi Matsumoto, Advanced Health Sciences M1

Akatsuki Nakashima, Faculty of Art and Regional Design B3

Shotaro Takada, Faculty of Economics, B1

Interviewees

Lulie Molla Desalegne, Some Donzala David, Erjon, Krasniqi,

Hoang Yen Thi Hoang, Muhmad Mustofa

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