

Coordinator for International Relations Report

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Introduction

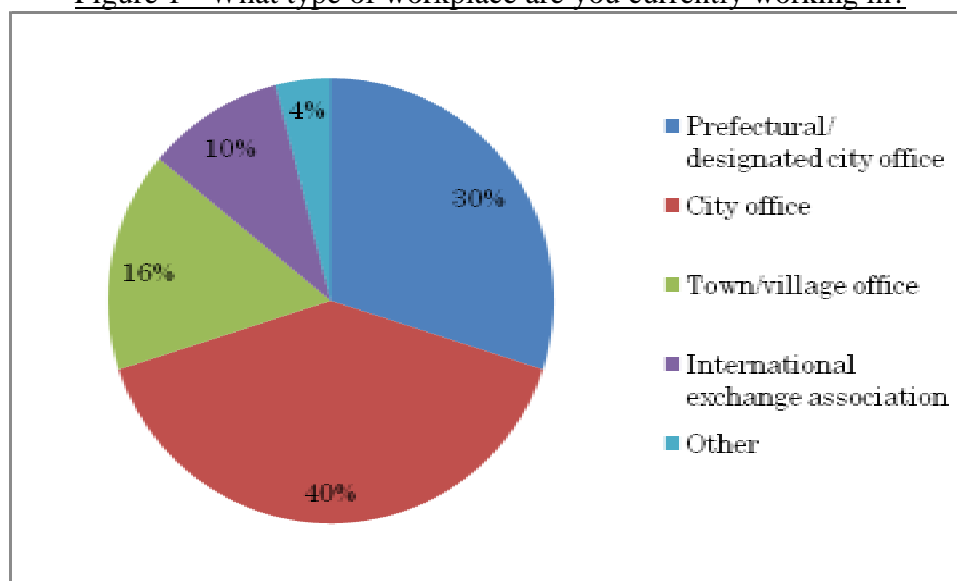
As with JET Programme participant numbers on the whole, Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) positions have also been declining in recent years. As historically there have been fewer CIR positions compared to Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) positions, this trend has had a more dramatic effect on CIRs throughout Japan. To combat this National AJET would like to look into the different types of activities CIRs are doing to promote internationalisation in their communities, and also what CIRs can do to promote the JET Programme.

The purpose of this report is to present examples of CIR-involved activities, and how CIRs are promoting these activities to their community. It is hoped that this report will provide examples, not only for CLAIR and the Ministries, but also for Contracting Organisations, and current and future CIRs to put into practice in their own communities.

Method

The data and analysis for this report is based on a survey conducted by AJET in April 2009. This survey collected responses from CIRs throughout Japan. There were 50 respondents, with the vast majority of respondents (88%) being English language speakers. Unfortunately, this means there is a bias in this survey reflecting English speaking CIRs, and so this report may not reflect the situation of non-English speaking CIRs.

Figure 1 - What type of workplace are you currently working in?



Most respondents were CIRs working in city offices or prefectural/designated city offices as illustrated in Figure 1 above. CIRs at town/village offices or international exchange associations accounted for a much smaller percentage. The largest group of respondents were

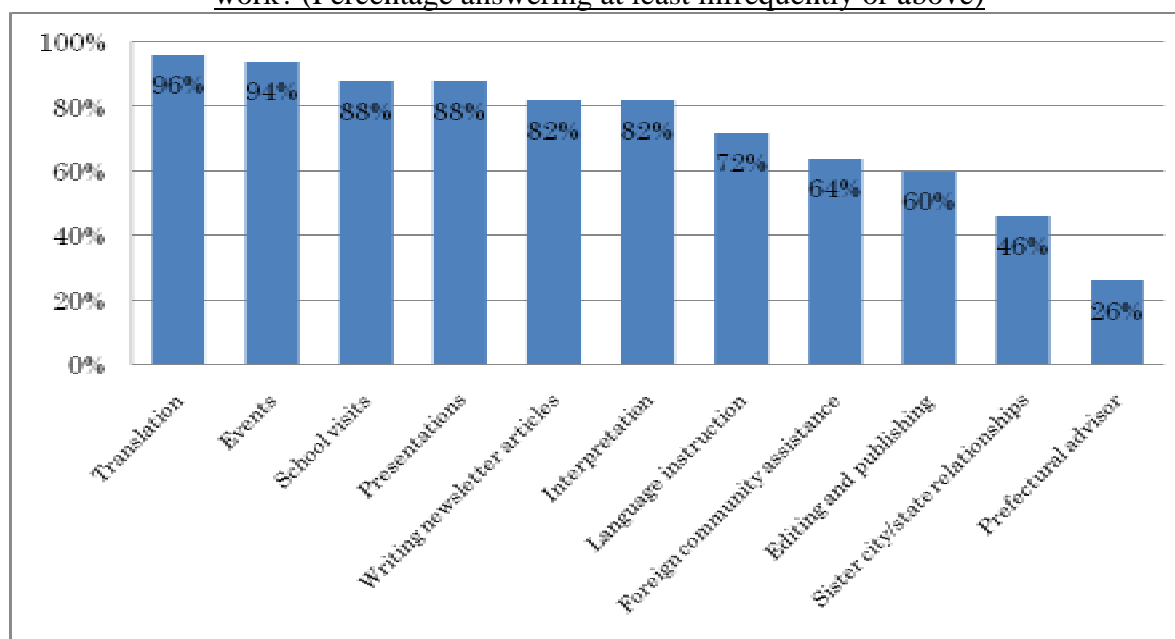
in their first year (44%), and 34% were in their second year.

In *Chapter 3: Work* of the General Information Handbook (GIH, 2008), CLAIR provides a list of common CIR work duties. This list was used as the basis for survey responses regarding the type and frequency of activities, as well as the perceived usefulness of these activities done by individual CIRs. The survey consisted of 24 questions with a variety of answer formats such as “yes” or “no” answers, Lickert scale answers (a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best and 1 being the worst), choices from a set list of answers, and free response sections. Moreover, several survey respondents allowed further contact via email, through which additional information was collected.

CIR Activities

In response to what sorts of activities CIRs engage in respondents were asked to rank the following activities: school visits, translation, presentations, writing newsletter articles, interpretation, language instruction, events, sister city/state relationships, editing and publishing, foreign community assistance, prefectural advisor, and other, according to the frequency they engage in them with the following choices: never, infrequently, often, and very often.

Figure 2 - How often do you engage in the following sorts of activities as part of your CIR work? (Percentage answering at least infrequently or above)



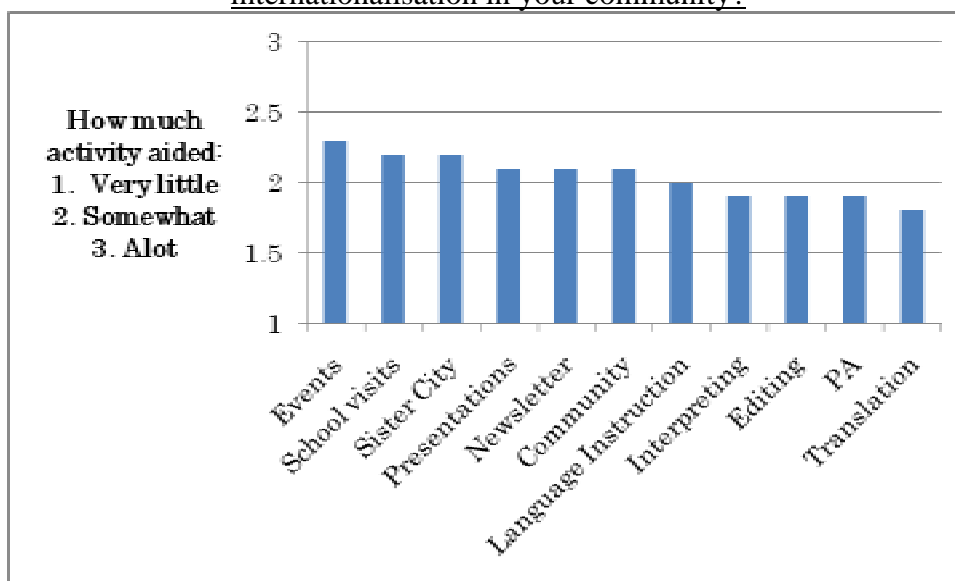
Looking at this data by type of workplace (prefectural/designated city office, city office, town/village office, and international exchange association) we can see respondents working in certain types of offices engage in certain activities more or less often depending on their location. Figure 3 below shows the activities that CIRs from certain workplaces were more or less likely to engage in.

Figure 3 – Likelihood of CIR doing activity by workplace

	Prefectural/ designated city office	City office	Town/village office	International exchange association
More likely to engage in activity	Translation	Events	Language instruction	Events, school visits
Less likely to engage in activity	School visits, events	Editing and publishing	Translation	Language instruction

In regards to how much CIRs feel their activities aid in internationalisation in their communities, most activities were regarded as aiding internationalisation somewhat (see Figure 4). The activity that respondents rated the most helpful to internationalisation was events, followed by school visits and sister city relationships. The activities rated least helpful were translation, followed by interpreting, editing and publishing, and prefectural advisor.

Figure 4 - How much do you feel the activities in which you engage aid in internationalisation in your community?



When comparing Figures 3 and 4, we can see that CIRs from city offices and international associations are more likely to engage in activities that respondents rated higher as aiding internationalisation (e.g. events and school visits). While prefectural/designated city office CIRs are less likely to engage in the activities rated higher for aiding internationalisation, and more likely to engage in activities respondents rated lower for aiding internationalisation (e.g. translation).

Starting New Projects

Figure 5 - How much freedom do you have to start projects on your own? / How open is your contracting organisation to starting new projects?

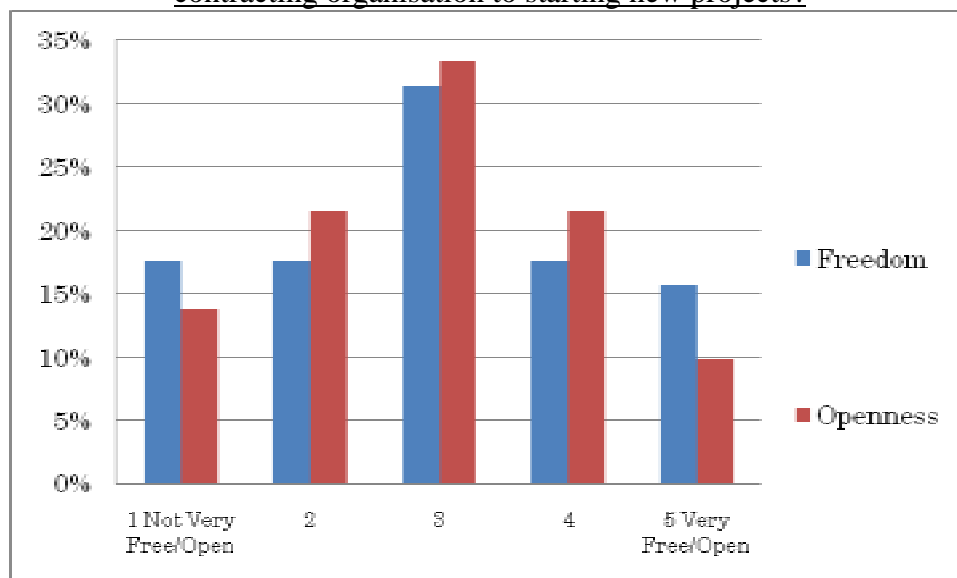


Figure 5 shows an average distribution; there is no trend for Contracting Organisations to be more or less open/ CIRs having more or less freedom to start new projects. In other words, every situation is different. A trend showing more freedom and openness to starting new projects would be ideal for CIRs to begin promoting the JET Programme.

In relation to what, if any, barriers to starting new projects CIRs experienced responses included time/workload, budget, content of the project, participants, resistance from Contracting Organisation, prefectural office policy, Contracting Organisations attitude towards CIRs, language barrier of foreign residents, and lack of support.

Of the factors above, the most mentioned was budget issues (34% of respondents). Many Contracting Organisations are facing shrinking budgets, and this affects the ability of CIRs to plan new activities. Many organisations require any new activity to cost nothing. As one CIR wrote:

“If a project requires a budget then it is impossible.” (1st year, prefectural/designated city office CIR)

CIRs are also aware of the current economic climate and how it is affecting their jobs:

“The things I have successfully proposed have been budgetless and almost entirely do-it-myself. Because of the current economic situation it is of little use for me to suggest anything that will require a budget.” (1st year, city office CIR)

A lack of time/heavy workload was the next most mentioned obstacle to starting new projects (29% of question respondents). Many CIRs are already busy with the many different activities they do throughout the year or have a large number of responsibilities. This makes starting new projects difficult. As one CIR wrote:

“Time! Although the CIR position here doesn’t have translating and interpretation jobs as in the cities, school visits, monthly *kohos* (municipal newsletters) and numerous events take up much of our time” (1st year, town/village office CIR)

A significant number of CIRs above mentioned budget as a barrier to starting new projects. While 63% of respondents have not felt worried about their position due to budget issues, the majority of CIRs employed in town/village have (63%).

Awareness of CIR Activities

Survey respondents were asked to rate how aware of their activities they feel their workplaces and communities are. As illustrated in Figures 6 and 7, in general more respondents felt that their workplace and community were unaware of their activities.

Figure 6 - How aware of your activities do you feel your workplace is?

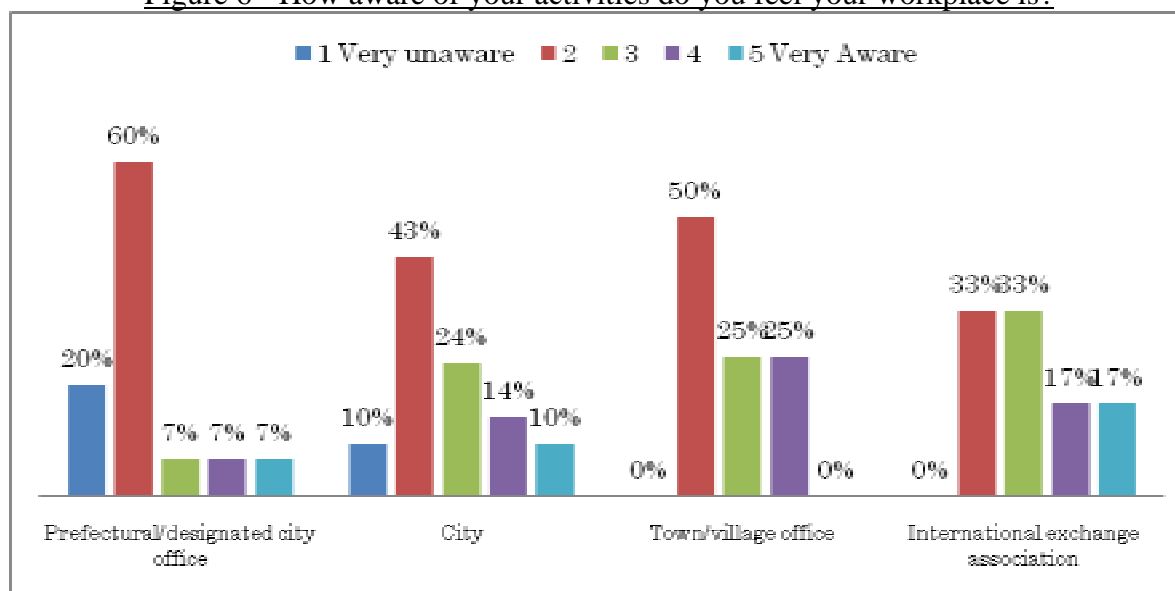
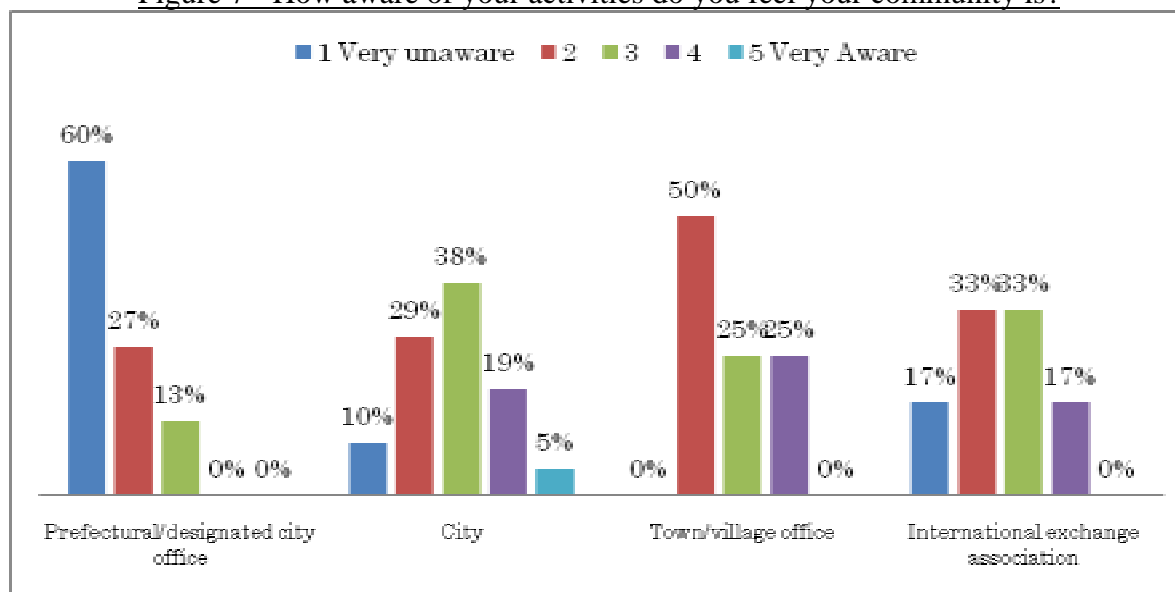


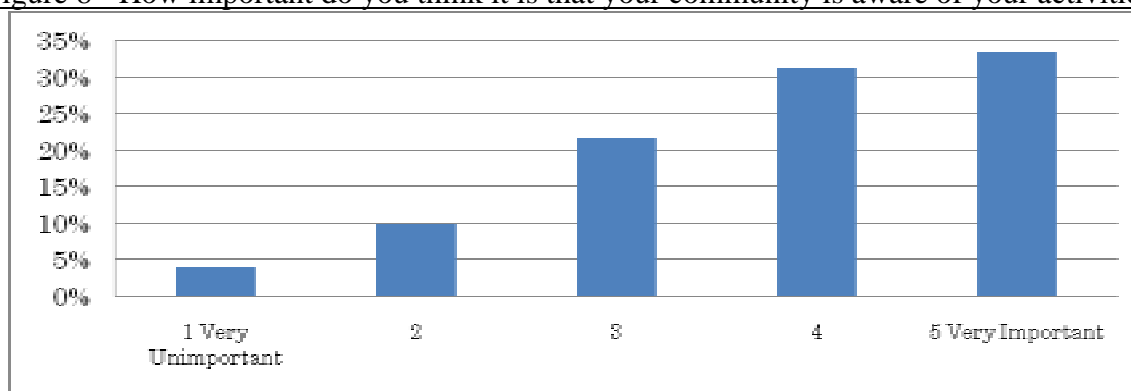
Figure 7 - How aware of your activities do you feel your community is?



More CIRs in prefectural/designated city offices felt their workplace, and especially their community, were unaware of their activities. This may be due to the fact that CIRs in prefectural/designated city offices responded that they most often engage in activities that do not aid in internationalisation. This suggests that activities which aid internationalisation also promote perceived community awareness of the CIR.

In relation to how important respondents think it is that their community is aware of their activities, a large majority of respondents felt that it was important their community be aware of their activities (see Figure 8). So even though most CIRs feel it is important that their community be aware of their activities, the majority of CIRs actually feel their community is unaware. This indicates that overall, CIR activities are not currently being promoted effectively to the community.

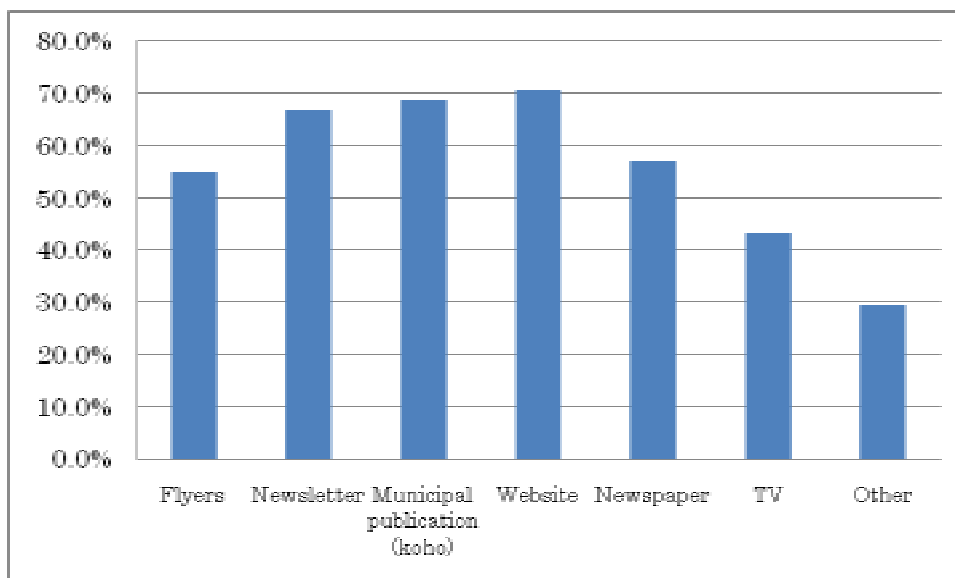
Figure 8 - How important do you think it is that your community is aware of your activities?



Promotion of CIR Activities

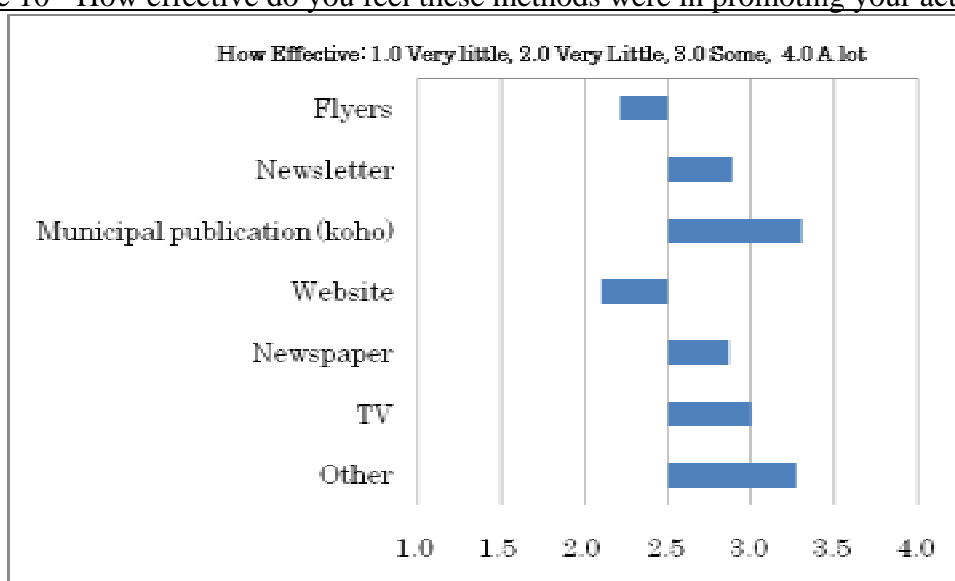
Ways CIR activities have been promoted responses are show in Figure 9.

Figure 9 - In what ways have your activities been promoted to your community?



As shown in Figure 9, CIRs most widely use websites, municipal publications (koho), and newsletters, with 65% or more of respondents using these methods. Other methods of promotion used by CIRs included: word of mouth, email, and radio. Comparing this to Figure 10 we see that respondents rated municipal publications (koho) the most effective. Unfortunately, the most highly used method, websites, was rated the least effective. Additionally, TV and newspapers were rated as effective, but not as many respondents utilized this method of promotion. This further supports the idea that CIR activities need to be promoted more effectively. However, 69% of CIRs responded that their events had received media coverage. Newspapers received the highest number of responses (69% of those receiving media coverage). Coverage via TV was also high (50% of those receiving media coverage). This is promising as it shows the media is willing to cover CIR activities and is an effective way for CIRs and the JET Programme to be promoted.

Figure 10 - How effective do you feel these methods were in promoting your activities?



Conclusion

National AJET acknowledges the importance of all activities that CIRs engage in. While activities such as translation or prefectural advisor may not seem to aid internationalisation much, CIRs greatly contribute to their Contracting Organisations through these activities. However, to further promote CIRs and the JET Programme, CIRs should be encouraged to engage in projects such as events and school visits that do aid internationalisation more.

The current financial situation facing many Contracting Organisations should be taken into consideration when starting new activities. CIRs should be encouraged to undertake projects that carry little or no cost. Events are effective in increasing the awareness of a CIR in his or her community, and are an important part of grassroots internationalisation. Additionally, CIRs should also be encouraged to engage in activities that promote internationalisation within their workplaces.

CIRs are in a position to be able to use the media to promote their activities. The media have shown a willingness to promote CIR events and projects, so CIRs should be encouraged to engage them

Case Study 1: Event - Fun in the Snow Day

A majority of town and village CIR respondents feel worried that their CIR position may be cut due to budget issues. Dominic Abordo is a CIR working in Kosaka in northern Akita Prefecture. His event, “Fun in the Snow Day”, is an example of what town/village CIRs are doing to promote their position to their community without the need for a budget.

Mr. Abordo planned “Fun in the Snow Day” to promote the area’s ALTs and CIR to the children of Kosaka through snow play, as well as to promote cultural exchange by introducing how people from different countries enjoy the snow. He enlisted the help of four neighbouring ALTs for the event, and approximately 30 children from the town afterschool program attended. Participants played games such as snowman building contests, snowball basketball, and snow fights while having a chance to interact with foreigners in English.

Events such as these are a chance for CIRs to promote to the community the variety of activities in which CIRs engage. As Mr. Abordo wrote, “[W]hen students and townspeople participate in events like ‘Fun in the Snow Day’, they are given an opportunity to interact with us as cultural ambassadors, which is one of the purposes of the JET Program. Hosting activities outside of school helps break down the stereotype that JET participants = English teachers. We have a lot more to offer, and this becomes apparent during cultural events.”

Both the Contracting Organisation and CIR felt the event was a success based on the large attendance and the enthusiasm of participants. “Many [participants] asked if this event would be hosted again next year, and a few parents contacted me to thank me for hosting ‘Fun in the Snow’ Day. This was definitely a worthwhile event for everyone involved.” Not only did this event promote the CIR to students and their parents, but this event also received coverage from Akita Television where the CIR position was mentioned frequently and Mr. Abordo was interviewed in Japanese.

Mr. Abordo felt that this event, along with his other CIR duties, was successful in promoting the CIR position to his community. “I think that the success of the ‘Fun in the Snow Day’ event served as a pleasant reminder of the importance of having a CIR in my town. Kosaka has a very international feel for a small town, and both my Contracting Organisation and the townspeople attribute part of that to the CIR's events and activities.”

One aspect of this event that Mr. Abordo stressed was that this event required no budget. As mentioned previously, budget restrictions were the most cited restrictions to starting new events by survey respondents. This is just one example of an event that requires no budget to be successful in promoting the CIR position. As Mr. Abordo stated, “Many CIRs claim that they cannot plan events because of budget issues. However, this event, as well as other events I have helped plan, are indications that a budget is often completely and totally unnecessary when trying to get your point across.”

Case Study 2: Newsletter – Bonnie’s Mini Kokusai Chishiki

Many workplaces are not very aware of activities done by CIRs. Bonnie McClure is a CIR in Yokosuka City who introduced a newsletter that has helped promote her position within her workplace. This activity requires no budget to implement and does an excellent job of promoting the CIR position.

The newsletter, called “Bonnie’s Mini Kokusai Chishiki,” is posted to her city’s internal bulletin board once a week. About 4000 employees have access to the newsletter. The newsletter, written in Japanese, contains comments from the CIR about the local culture, a main article about an aspect of a foreign culture, and also English idioms with an explanation in Japanese. Past newsletters have introduced topics such as Cambodian traditional proverbs, etymologies of US state names, etc.

The newsletter appears to be widely read among city employees. As Ms. McClure states, “Whenever I meet people from different departments, I always find that some of them are reading my newsletter.” She also stated that her newsletter has been very successful based on the number of positive comments she and her superior have received.

This has led to an increased awareness and visibility of the CIR in the workplace. “I can’t think of any project that could better promote the CIR position. A lot more city employees are aware now that I exist and that I exist for everyone’s benefit. When I meet people from different departments and they hear my name, they’re like ‘Oh! You’re Bonnie!’ because they know my name from my newsletter.”

CIRs can be very busy and may not have a lot of time to devote to new projects. Ms. McClure is in a similar situation, “I can’t take on a whole lot more [projects], because the mainstay of my job is supposed to be translation so I need to have some days in the week open for working on translation projects.” However, this newsletter is something that she has been able to implement despite these challenges.

Questions

1. What is CLAIR currently doing to promote the JET Programme within Japan? How specifically are you promoting CIR positions?
2. Media coverage is an excellent way to promote CIR activities and the JET Programme. Would it be possible for CLAIR to consider providing some sort of training to more effectively engage the media to help promote CIR/JET related activities?
3. What aspects of the JET Programme does CLAIR feel are the most effective for promotion? What is MIC's position? In relation to this, does CLAIR or MIC have any resources, such as promotional or informational materials, that CIRs would find useful when promoting the JET Programme?
4. National AJET is unable to survey one important partner necessary for successfully promoting the JET Programme: Contracting Organisations. Does CLAIR or MIC have ways of receiving feedback from COs to find out information such as which CIR activities they find most important?
5. This year the CIR Handbook is being revised. Will there be more examples of activities that aid internationalisation but do not cost money that CIRs can implement in their own communities?
6. In addition to the CIR Handbook, the JET Forums are a great place for JETs to share information and ideas however; they seem to be an underutilised resource. A similar forum for CIRs is also maintained by the CIR Network. As a result of this report, National AJET would like to encourage more CIRs to make use of these online forums to share ideas and resources. Is it also possible for CLAIR to promote the use of these online resources so that CIRs can help each other?

Appendix

Bonnie's ミニ国際知識 Vol. 15

ボニーは日曜日、たけのこ BBQ に参加しました！
たけのこ天ぷら、たけのこみそ焼き、タンポポ・三つ葉・雪ノ下天ぷらなど、
新鮮なものをいっぱい食べて、大変美味しかった。

ボニーは自然界のなかで育ったから、今の街中生活をしている間に心が半分寝ているけど、
山中の竹林に行ったらその寝ている半分が起きられました。
生きていることをとても感じた一日でした。

今週の国際文化ファクト

日本の国際ランキング

色々な面白い国際ランキングがありますが、今日はその中から大きな 6 つを説明します。

1) 国際連合の人間開発指数(United Nations Human Development Index) は、国の富・健康・教育の発展レベルを測ります。2007-2008 のランキングで、日本は 180 カ国の 8 位でした。上位 3 カ国は上からアイスランド・ノルウェー・カナダで、下位 3 カ国は下したからシエラレオネ・中央アフリカ共和国・コンゴ民主共和国です。

2) 世界経済フォーラムの世界競争力報告(World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index) は、国が国民に富をもたらす能力を測ります。日本は 2008-2009 のランキングで 134 カ国の 9 位でした。上位 3 カ国は上から米国・スイス・デンマークで、下位 3 カ国は下したからチャド・ジンバブエ・ブルンジです。

3) 世界経済フォーラムの世界男女格差報告(World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)は、男性に比べて女性の健康・教育・経済権限・政治的権限を測ります。2008 のランキングで、日本は 130 カ国の 98 位でした。上位 3 カ国は上からノルウェー・フィンランド・スウェーデンで、下位 3 カ国は下したからイエメン・チャド・サウジアラビアです。日本のランキングが先進国だけではなく、世界中でも低いのは、日本の女性の健康・教育のレベルが高いのに、政治的権限・経済権限が非常に低いからです。(女性の平均収入は全体的に男性の平均収入の 45% で、類似業務の場合は 59% です。)

4) ウォールストリート・ジャーナル / ヘリテージ財団 (Wall Street Journal / Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom) は、ビジネス・財産・投資・労働などの自由を測ります。日本は 179 カ国の 19 位です。上位 3 カ国は上から香港・シンガポール・オーストラリアで、下位 3 カ国は下したから北朝鮮・ジンバブエ・キューバです。

5) トランスペアレンシー・インターナショナルの腐敗認識指数 (Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index)は、公務員・政治家がどの程度腐敗していると認識されるかの指数です。2008 のランキングで、日本は180カ国の18位でした。上位3カ国は上からデンマーク・ニュージーランド・スウェーデンで、下位3カ国は下からソマリア・ミャンマー・イラクです。

6) 国境なき記者団報道の自由ランキング (Reporters without Borders Worldwide Press Freedom Index) の2008 ランキングでは、日本は173カ国の29位でした。上位3カ国は上からアイスランド・ルクセンブルグ・ノルウェーで、下位3カ国は下からエリトリア・北朝鮮・トルクメニスタンです。日本のランキングが先進国にしてみれば高くないのは、記者クラブのシステムのせいでニュースの自由報道が妨害されているからです。しかし、右翼団体からのメディアに対する激しい攻撃が最近減ったということで、2007年の42位から上がりました。

今週の英語慣用句

1) “early bird” 「早朝の鳥」

意味：早起きの人

例：“He’s an early bird; he gets up at 5:00 a.m. to go jogging.” 「彼は早起きの人で、午前5時に起きてジョギングに行っている。」

2) “night owl” 「夜間のふくろ」

意味：夜型の人

例：“I’m both a procrastinator and a night owl, so I do my best studying at 3:00 a.m. the same day as the test.” 「私はぐずの常習犯の上に夜型だから、テストの当日午前3時の勉強が一番効きます。」