

# TSUKUBA ALUMNI

Shanti Volunteer Association  
Laos Office Coordinator

**ASAGI Mariya**

## Advantages of studying at the University of Tsukuba in my career and life

Currently, I am engaged in supporting education and activities related to water, sanitation, and hygiene for children of ethnic minorities in Laos. Rather than working directly with children, I support training programs for teachers in cooperation with local government officials.

When I was in junior high school, I heard many stories from a teacher who was a member of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and became vaguely interested in foreign countries, particularly developing countries. I may have been influenced by an environment with values such as “the best is to graduate from a local university and work in your hometown.”

I majored in education at the university and was interested in children’s play and what it meant for people to be immersed in something. Because play involves physical activities and sports, when I heard that the University of Tsukuba was starting a new graduate program, “Joint Master’s Program in International Development and Peace through Sport,” which aims to promote international cooperation through sports, “This is it!”, I thought. To be exact, I was a student in the “0th Generation,” i.e., before the program officially started. Through this program, I was able to gain a perspective on how support should be provided to the many children in refugee camps and play programs, etc.

I had to do an overseas internship as a course requisite and spent a year working in a refugee camp in Thailand, considered a leave of absence from school. Later, I got a job at the support organization with which I



At a refugee camp in Thailand

## The 0th Generation Pioneer: The Way of International Volunteers

did my internship. There are many situations where what I learned at university does not apply in the field, but I feel lucky that I was able to find the job I wanted in the shortest possible time.

### My fondest memories as a student

I was so busy trying to keep up with my academics that I could not have any student-like “screw-ups,” and I feel I could have enjoyed my student life a little more. Nevertheless, the program itself was just starting up, so I had an opportunity to explore my interests. I was one of only two students in the program, so, I often took classes with international students at the newly founded Tsukuba International Academy for Sports. Some of the international students had experience working in the business world and some were athletes who had played competitive sports, so I was able to gain knowledge from various perspectives. It was a great experience for me to simulate what it would be like to work overseas and in a different culture.

### Message to Students of the University of Tsukuba

The University of Tsukuba is a university where you can really experience many things. In addition, various networks and sources of information that are stimulating and offer many opportunities are readily available. There are many opportunities to engage with various people and broaden your values and thinking, so I encourage you to exploit them.

### PROFILE ASAGI Mariya

Born in Ehime Prefecture, Japan  
Completed Master’s Program in Physical Education, Health  
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