Yohei Sasakawa, born in Tokyo on January 8, 1939, is Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, a private, non-profit foundation established in 1962 for the purpose of carrying out philanthropic activities, using revenue from motorboat racing.

After 20 years in the business sector, Sasakawa joined The Nippon Foundation in 1981. Sasakawa is known for bringing an entrepreneurial spirit to his work with entities from the political, governmental, academic, and private sectors in addressing issues in such diverse areas as health, education, food security, and maritime safety.

His global fight against leprosy and its accompanying stigma and social discrimination is an issue to which he has remained highly committed for more than 40 years.

Professional Experience

2005 - Present  Chairman, The Nippon Foundation
1989 - 2005  President, The Nippon Foundation
1988 - 1989  Acting President, The Nippon Foundation

Official Appointments

Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar [2013 - Present]
Goodwill Ambassador for the Welfare of the National Races in Myanmar
(Appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan) [2012 - Present]
Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy
(Appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan) [2007 - Present]
World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination [2001 - Present]

As of July 2019
**Initiatives taken by Yohei Sasakawa**

*2018*

Announced the launch of the CHANGE FOR THE BLUE project as a new, large-scale, nationwide initiative bringing together multiple stakeholders including private-sector entities, the government, and academic institutions to find and implement practical programs to address the problem of marine debris.

Launched the 13th Global Appeal to end stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy, endorsed by Disabled Peoples’ International, from New Delhi, India.

Held the National Leprosy Conference in Myanmar, attended by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, calling for an end to discrimination against persons affected by leprosy.

Signed the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the Myanmar Government and two ethnic armed organizations as a witness and in the capacity of Special Envoy of the Government of Japan. As with the NCA signed in 2015, Japan was the only non-adjacent country invited to this signing ceremony and pledged continued support for the peace process.

Held a ceremony to mark the completion of 460 schools built in cooperation with the Government of Myanmar. Begun in 2002, the school construction program in Myanmar has built 300 schools in Shan State, 100 schools in Rakhine State, and 60 schools in Ayeyarwady Region.

Held the True Colours Festival, an arts festival featuring performances by artists with disabilities from 18 countries, in Singapore.

Opened The Nippon Foundation Para Arena, a dedicated para sports gymnasium in Odaiba, Tokyo, that will provide a training environment for athletes aiming to compete in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Held the first international conference in Asia dealing with human rights issues faced by persons with albinism, focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, in close collaboration with the United Nations Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism.

*2017*

At a plenary meeting of the United Nations Ocean Conference, proposed that the United Nations establish an intergovernmental panel for comprehensive ocean governance.

Together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), launched Global Appeal 2017, for the elimination of stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy, from New Delhi, India.

Held a ceremony to mark the completion of buildings for conflict-affected people in southeast Myanmar as the part of the First Rehabilitation Programme, started in March 2016. Based on a further request from the Myanmar side, started the Second Rehabilitation Programme, which includes construction of houses, schools, health care centers and wells, in Kayin State and Mon State with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Signed a partnership agreement with the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for cooperation and coordination in the area of volunteer activities for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
2016

Jointly organized the International Symposium on Leprosy and Human Rights in the Vatican with the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers and the Good Samaritan Foundation. The Symposium adopted and approved Conclusion and Recommendations calling for an end to stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy.

Established The Nippon Foundation Ocean Innovation Consortium, a nationwide initiative that engages the industrial, academic, public, and private sectors with the aim of building human capacity in offshore development.

Completed a distribution program to provide food and humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas in Myanmar, reaching a total of approximately 500,000 people over five years.

Launched the Rehabilitation Program, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and with the agreement of the Government of Myanmar, to build houses, schools, health clinics and other facilities for conflict-affected people in Myanmar. The program covers the region under the influence of the ethnic armed organizations that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015.

Launched the Seabed 2030, an initiative to map the world's ocean floor by the year 2030.

The Japan-China Sasakawa Medical Fellowship, established to promote mutual understanding and friendship between China and Japan in medicine and health care in 1987, marked its 30th anniversary and saw the number of fellows reach approximately 2,200.

2015

Launched the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program (MSP), one of the few programs to offer a master's degree in this field. This joint effort with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), and the Japan Coast Guard nurtures specialists in the field of maritime safety and security in Asia.

Established The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center to strengthen the functions of national Para sports federations and to raise public awareness of paralympic movements, toward the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games and beyond.

Led the Japanese government delegation of election observers in the Myanmar General Election. Confirmed that the elections were held in a fair manner as a significant first step towards progress in democratization.

Signed the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement between the Myanmar Government and eight ethnic armed organizations as a witness and in the capacity of Special Envoy of the Government of Japan. Japan was the only non-adjacent country invited to this Signing Ceremony and pledged continued support for the peace process.
2014
The number of Sasakawa Fellows from the International Maritime University (IMU) and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) combined passed the 1,000 mark.

2013
Appointed as Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar. Assisted in promoting dialogue between the Government of Myanmar and ethnic armed organizations at their request.

2012
Led the distribution of USD 3 million of food and medicine to conflict-affected people in inaccessible areas of Myanmar under the influence of ethnic armed organizations.

Initiated a series of regional international symposia on leprosy and human rights to raise awareness and enhance implementation of the UN resolution and accompanying Principles and Guidelines on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. The first symposium was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Subsequent symposia were held in New Delhi (2012), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2013), in Rabat, Morocco (2014) and concluded with the final symposium in Geneva (2015) incorporating a research report and recommendations by an International Working Group.

2011
Conducted various relief work projects in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami including distribution of emergency aid supplies, support for nearly 700 volunteer groups working in affected areas, and a symposium where world-leading experts on radiation and health discussed the health risks for people in Fukushima. These initiatives were funded by both domestic and overseas public donations.

Initiated the Tokyo-Washington Dialog to develop bilateral policy proposals

2010
Assisted the Japanese government in submitting a resolution on “elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members” together with accompanying “Principles and Guidelines” to the UN Human Rights Council. The resolution was subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly.

Established schools of prosthetics and orthotics in Indonesia and the Philippines

2009
Launched ASEAN Secretariat - The Nippon Foundation Project on Leprosy and Human Dignity
2008
As the Japanese Government’s Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, assisted the Japanese government in submitting to the UN Human Rights Council a draft resolution on “elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members” by the UN Human Rights Council.

2007
Established the Aids to Navigation Fund, a new initiative for the protection of the Malacca-Singapore Straits

2006
Established the Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation in New Delhi

Launched the Global Appeal to End Stigma and Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy

2004
Launched the Traditional Medicine Project in Mongolia

2000
Initiated The Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals (API Fellowships) in five countries in Asia

1999
Established an international network of maritime universities

Provided pediatric medical assistance to victims of the Chernobyl Disaster

1993
Chaired an international joint research program to develop an Arctic shipping route

1987
Established the Sasakawa Medical Scholarship Program to train 2000 medical doctors from the People’s Republic of China.

Created the Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF), a grant-in-aid program that has resulted in a network linking 69 major universities worldwide

1986
Initiated the Sasakawa Global 2000 Program to enable African nations to achieve self-sufficiency in staple crop production
Honors

2019  Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun, Japan
2019  Gandhi Peace Prize (Awarded in 2018)
2018  Honorary Citizenship of the Republic of Palau
2018  The Royal Order of Monisaraphon Knight Grand Cross, Cambodia
2017  Ocean’s 8 Award, The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
2017  Health and Human Rights Award, International Council of Nurses
2017  Plus ratio quam vis Medal, Jagiellonian University
2017  Health-for-All Gold Medal, World Health Organization
2016  The Award of Distinction of the President of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
2015  International Maritime Prize (Awarded in 2014)
2014  The Rule of Law Award, International Bar Association
2013  Gold Medal of Merit, Republic of Serbia
2011  Royal Order of Sahametrei class Maha Sirivudha (Grand Cross), Cambodia
2011  Commander of the Medal of Gratitude Central Africa
2010  Commander of the Order of the Defender of the Realm (Panglima Mangku Negara)
       Tan Sri, Malaysia
2010  Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit
2010  Ethiopian Millennium Gold Medal
2010  Royal Order of the Polar Star-Commander First Class, Kingdom of Sweden
2010  Ordre de Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste
2010  The Grand Cross of the Order of the Falcon with Star, Republic of Iceland
2010  Order of the Knight of Dannebrog, Kingdom of Denmark
2010  Dr. Norman E. Borlaug Medallion of the World Food Prize
2010  Commander of the Order of the White Rose of Finland
2010  The Patriarch’s Chart of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill
2010  The Diploma of Honorary Academician of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences
2009  ‘Science for Society’ Award, Hungarian Academy of Sciences
2007  International Gandhi Award (Awarded in 2006)
2007  Polestar Order, Mongolia
2007  Coast Guard Legion of Honor (Degree of Maginoo)
2006  Commandeur de l’Ordre National du Mali à titre Étranger
2004  Yomiuri International Cooperation Prize, Japan
2003  Commandeur de l’Ordre Royal du Monisaraphon, Cambodia
2003  National Construction Medal, Cambodia
2003  Officier de l’Ordre National, Government of Madagascar
2003  The Special Award, World Maritime University, Sweden
2001  Vaclav Havel Memorial Medal, Czech President Vaclav Havel
2001  Millennium Gandhi Award, International Leprosy Union
2000  Order of Merit in the rank of Grand Officer, Government of Romania
2000  International Green Pen Awards honour for Pacific Environmental Journalism, Fiji
2000  Decerne la Medaille d'Honneur de Menerbes, France
1998  Health-for-All Gold Medal, World Health Organization
1997  China Health Medal, Republic of China
1996  Frantsiska Scarina Medal, People’s Republic of Belarus
1996  Medal for Merits Third Degree, Ukraine
1996  Kin Inka Sho, Republic of Peru
1996  Order of Friendship, Russian Federation
1996  Order of Merit for Distinguished Service-Third Grade, Republic of Peru
1995  La Grande Étoile de Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti
1989  Grand Officier de L’Ordre du Mono, Republic of Togo

**Honorary Degrees**

2018  Honorary Doctor, Institute of Engineering and Technology, Mongolia
2018  Advisory Professor, Jilin University, China
2017  Doctor of Laws, University of Minnesota, USA
2016  Doctor Honoris Causa, Sofia University, Bulgaria
2013  Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University, University of York, The United Kingdom
2012  Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities, University of Malaya, Malaysia
2012  Honorary Degree of Doctor of Agricultural Development Honoris Causa, Hawassa University
2009  Honorary Professorship, Yunnan University, China
2008  Honorary Degree of Doctor in Humane Letters, University for Peace
2008  Honorary Professorship, Dalian University of Foreign Language, China
2007  Honorary Doctor of Humanity, University of Cambodia, Cambodia
2007  Honorary Professorship, Guizhou University, China
2007  Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA
2006  Honorary Professorship, Dalian Maritime University, China
2005  Doctor Honoris Causa, Jadavpur University, India
2005  Honorary Chair, International Association of Maritime Universities
2004  Honorary Professorship, Shanghai Maritime University, China
2004  Doctor Honoris Causa, World Maritime University, Sweden
2004  Honorary Professorship, Heilongjiang University, China
2004  Honorary Professorship, Harbin Medical University, China
2003  Honorary Professorship, China Medical University, China
2003  Doctor Honoris Causa, Academy of Management, Mongolia
2000  Honorary Professorship, Yanbian University, China
2000  Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Bucharest, Romania
2000  Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Major Publications

2019  My Struggle against Leprosy, Festina Lente Japan, Tokyo
2016  Aisuru Sokoku e (To My Beloved Motherland), Sankei Shimbun Publications Inc., Tokyo
2015  Shinshi no hinkaku 2 (A Gentleman’s Dignity 2), PHP Publishing, Tokyo
2014  Zanshin, Sekai no hansen-byo wo seiatsu suru (Remaining Mindful, Eliminating Leprosy Worldwide)
2012  Shinshi no hinkaku (A Gentleman’s Dignity), PHP Publishing, Tokyo
2010  Rin-jin, chugoku-jin ni itte okitai koto (Things I Would Like to Say to Our Neighbors, the Chinese), PHP Publishing, Tokyo
2010  Soredemo tabako wo suimasu ka? (And You Still Smoke?) Gentosha, Inc. Tokyo
2010  Fukano wo kano ni ? Sekai no hansen-ryou tongo tatakai (Making the Impossible Possible: The World’s Battle with Leprosy), Akashi Shoten, Tokyo
2009  Wakamono yo, sekai ni habatake (Youth! Get Out and See the World!) PHP Publishing, Tokyo
2008  Ningen toshite ikite hoshii kara (Because They Should be Able to Live as Human Beings, Too), Kairyusha Co.Ltd., Tokyo
2004  Sekai no hansen-byo ga nakunaru hi (The Day Leprosy Is Eradicated from the World), Akashi Shoten, Tokyo
2004  Konokuni anokuni (This Country and That Country), Sankei Shimbun-sha, Tokyo
1998  Gaimusho no shiranai sekai no sugao (Real Faces of the World Unknown to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Sankei Shimbun-sha, Tokyo
1996  Chie aru mono wa chie de tsuzuku (Those with Wisdom Fail for Wisdom), Crest Publishing House, Tokyo