

YOHEI SASAKAWA

Chairman of The Nippon Foundation

Honorary Chairman of The Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Web: <http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/en/>

Blog: <http://blog.canpan.info/yoheisasakawa/>

Twitter: @SasakawaYohei



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 on issues as diverse 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

Chairman, The Nippon Foundation (2005 – Present)

Honorary Chairman, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (2016 – Present)

President, The Nippon Foundation (1989 – 2005)

Official Appointments

Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar (2013 – Present)

Japanese Government 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 September, 2023

Major Initiatives Taken by Yohei Sasakawa

●Elimination of Leprosy

For over 40 years, Yohei Sasakawa has been closely involved in efforts to eliminate leprosy, working in close cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), governments, international organizations and NGOs, and organizations of persons affected by leprosy. Sasakawa has described the elimination of leprosy, one of the oldest diseases known to humankind, as his life's work. Up until the novel coronavirus pandemic, he was spending up to one third of every year traveling around the world as WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination, a position he has held since 2001.

In 2003, he first approached the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to seek to have leprosy taken up as a human rights issue and his advocacy led the then United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to pursue the matter. In recognition of his contribution, Sasakawa was in 2007 appointed as the Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy.

In response to a subsequent appeal by Sasakawa, the Japanese government submitted a draft resolution on "Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members" to the UN Human Rights Council. The resolution was cosponsored by 59 countries and unanimously adopted by the Council's member states on June 18, 2008. On the basis of this resolution, the Council's Advisory Committee worked out a set of principles and guidelines for eliminating discrimination. A resolution approving the principles and guidelines was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in September 2010 and subsequently by the UN General Assembly in December. Sasakawa has also actively engaged with persons affected by leprosy and their organizations and promoted their empowerment. To date, 22 such organizations have been supported by The Nippon Foundation and/or the Sasakawa Health Foundation. These organizations focus on a range of activities, including helping people affected by leprosy to know and access their rights and entitlements, working for socio-economic empowerment, and combating stigma, discrimination and rejection.

●Supporting People with Disabilities

For many years, Mr. Sasakawa has also been a strong advocate for persons with disabilities in several fields including sports, arts, education and employment. As soon as Tokyo was chosen as the host city of the 2020 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, he invited 28 Paralympic national sports federations in Japan in need of resources to set up offices in The Nippon Foundation building, and the foundation continues to fund their operations and support their international activities.

Recognizing that there had to be more opportunities for artists with disabilities, Mr. Sasakawa has been the driving force behind a series of arts festivals. The culmination of these long-standing efforts came in 2022 when he hosted his biggest arts festival for disabled artists to date, the True Colors Festival in Tokyo, which brought together over 100 artists from 12 countries and was attended by over 4,000 spectators and an online audience of around 20,000 worldwide. In addition, for more than 30 years, he has supported the capacity building and social participation of persons with disabilities, particularly in Southeast Asia. To date, he has initiated higher education opportunities for over 3,000 leaders with disabilities.

However, he had seen many cases where talented individuals who had graduated from university could not get jobs because of their disabilities and came to the conclusion that unless businesses change, the world will never change. In 2021, The Nippon Foundation started to cooperate with The Valuable 500, a global network of CEOs committed to disability inclusion in business. As the Valuable 500's sole Global Impact Partner, the foundation is promoting disability inclusion and systemic change in business with 500 global companies such as Apple, Google and Microsoft, and has invested US\$7 million to date. In addition, during the current crisis in Ukraine, he led the evacuation of persons with disabilities by establishing a framework of cooperation with NPOs from Ukraine, Israel and Austria. Through these efforts, the foundation has evacuated more than 4,000 persons with disabilities and their family members. In addition, under his leadership, the foundation has provided humanitarian assistance to more than 10,000 people with disabilities who chose not to leave.

●Building Human Capacity for Our World's Oceans

Yohei Sasakawa's fields of activity extend beyond public health and human rights. From when he became president of The Nippon Foundation in 1989, he has been actively involved in building connections with people across the globe to facilitate initiatives to protect the world's oceans. The problems facing our oceans today are complex, multifaceted and interlinked. They include global warming, ocean acidification, depletion of fishery resources and millions of tons of marine litter. Tackling each problem on its own is difficult and often does not result in solving the root of the issue.

To increase the effectiveness of initiatives that seek to find solutions, Saakawa has facilitated multidisciplinary human capacity development programs; he has also been working on establishing a mechanism in which The Nippon Foundation fellows emerging from these programs work together to solve the problems. As of September 2023, more than 1,600 fellows from 150 countries have successfully completed their programs.

The world's oceans are one and pay no heed to the borders created by humankind. Focusing on solutions to the problems facing the oceans encourages people to put aside their differences and work toward a common goal. With the aim of ensuring that people living on this planet a thousand or two thousand years from now have healthy oceans, Sasakawa continues to nurture a new generation of individuals who can tackle these challenges from a broad perspective.

●Peace Building in Myanmar

In June 2012, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed Sasakawa as its Goodwill Ambassador for the Welfare of the National Races in Myanmar and subsequently, in February 2013, as Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar, a move taken in recognition of the diverse humanitarian works performed by The Nippon Foundation in Myanmar under Sasakawa in the medical and educational fields over the previous decade. Appointed to help improve the welfare of Myanmar's ethnic groups, Sasakawa believes that Myanmar's democratization cannot succeed without peace building between the government and the ethnic groups and is playing a unique and indispensable role acting as a mediator between them. Sasakawa and The Nippon Foundation continue to provide emergency aid to internally displaced ethnic refugees from the country's civil war and this aid can reach those in need faster than official development assistance. Since 2012, Sasakawa has visited Myanmar for meetings and relief work more than 150 times.

●Work in Africa

In 1986, The Nippon Foundation established the Sasakawa Africa Association after then chairman Ryoichi Sasakawa approached Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and father of the 'Green Revolution' in India and Pakistan, about working together to help the continent avoid famine in future. SAA administers and manages Sasakawa Global 2000, a program through which smallholder farmers are taught modern farming methods, including the use of quality seed and small amounts of fertilizer. It has succeeded in increasing production by two to six times for the farmers that use its methods. At the heart of this program is the small-scale farmer, who has demonstrated that access to available technology can dramatically increase yields of staple food crop and strengthen the agricultural value chain. Millions of farmers in 14 sub-Saharan African countries have benefited as a result. Currently, the project is concentrating its activities in four countries—Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda—and Yohei Sasakawa believes it is possible to achieve and sustain a major expansion in both farm output and the subsequent processing and marketing of food crops.

Honors

2022	WHO Director-General's Global Health Leaders Award
2021	Order of Merit in the rank of Grand Officer, Ecuador
2019	<i>Seiron</i> Grand Prize, Fuji Sankei's Communications Group, Japan
2019	Jürgen Palm Award, The Association for International Sport for All
2019	Person of Cultural Merit, Japan
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
2013	Friendship Medal of the State of Vietnam, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
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	Ordem 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	<u>Vaclav Havel Memorial Medal, Czech President Vaclav Havel</u>
2001	Millennium Gandhi Award, International Leprosy Union
2000	Order of Merit in the rank of Grand Officer, Government of Romania
2000	International Green Pen Award <u>honour for Pacific Environmental Journalism, Fiji</u>
2000	Decerne la Medaille d'Honneur de Menerbes, France
1998	Al Hussein Bin Ali Decoration for Accomplishment-First Degree, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
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

- 2023 Honorary Doctorate, University of Belgrade, Serbia
2019 Doctor of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
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, Costa Rica
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

- 2023 Making the Impossible Possible: My Work for Leprosy Elimination and Human Rights, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, London
2019 No Matter Where the Journey Takes Me: One Man's Quest for a Leprosy-Free World, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, London
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 byo tono 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 tsumazuku* (Those with Wisdom Fail for Wisdom), Crest Publishing House, Tokyo