



SIRC-NF Fellows Newsletter



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Special points of interest:

- Introducing the three new SIRC-NF fellows
- Momoko Kitada shares her research findings with female cadets in Sweden



The Welcome Buffet for the New SIRC-NF Fellows

It is that time again when current students return from their summer holidays and new entrants come to begin their new academic life in Cardiff. After three months of near limbo the city streets spring back to life with the hustle and bustle of energetic and excited students. Although the existing fellows at SIRC have hardly taken a break from their PhDs to enjoy the summer, their excitement is evident as they eagerly prepare to usher in the new cohort of SIRC-Nippon Fellows. In a ceremony that has come to occupy an important place in the SIRC tradition over the past five years, the fellows are welcomed to Wales and Cardiff University, to begin what is certain to be a tough but exciting and adventurous journey - the PHD journey.

It is a buffet lunch that is, as usual, well attended by supervisors and other members of the university,

particularly the School of Social Sciences. The new fellows include Mr Stanley Abila from the Philippines, Ms Manasi Dutt from India and Ms Sarah Simons from Kenya. It is the first time in the history of the Nippon-SIRC Postgraduate Programme that female fellows outnumber male fellows in a batch.

The three new fellows were introduced to the gathered audience by the director of SIRC Prof. Helen Sampson, after which the existing fellows from different batches came forward to introduce themselves and offer their congratulations to their new colleagues for winning the prestigious fellowship. It was also a good opportunity for the fellows to be introduced to their future supervisors and get to know them. After the brief introductions and with the afternoon progressing smoothly, people became more relaxed and

the fellows, old and new started to mingle and share small talk in a light and lively atmosphere.

For those who can recall a similar ceremony in October 2004, six years ago, held to welcome the very first cohort into the SIRC-Nippon fellows programme and attended by Mr Yohei Sasakawa, the president of the Nippon Foundation, they can appreciate the impressive way that the programme has grown with some of those ushered in then already graduated and already pursuing their academic careers.

As the audience started leaving the buffet, it was the time for Nippon fellows to take pictures of each other. Smiles blooming on the fellows' faces in the picture taking should be a sign of the successful start in the new academic life of the new cohort. It was indeed a successful welcome buffet enjoyed by all!

Introducing new fellows: Sanley Abila

I have two master's degrees (philosophy, 2006 and bioethics, 2009). I was connected to the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) since 1999 until September 2009 as an instructor and later on as an assistant professor (2006). I came from a family of seafarers (father, brother, cousins, uncles). We lived in Iloilo City which is home to several maritime schools outside of Manila. Iloilo is about 240 kilometers south of Manila, on an island in Visayas called Panay. My home city is home to the first maritime university (John B. Lacson Maritime University) in the Philippines. My connection with the maritime industry is more personal in terms of family relations rather than academic or professional.

I have one research project that is being edited for publication. It was a documentary project on the relief operations and long-term rehabilitation efforts of the non-governmental organizations and foundations in the Philippines in the response to a maritime disaster, the

oil spill of 2006 near the island of Guimaras in the Philippines.

The first time I stepped out of the bus at Cardiff a lady sensed that I needed directions and immediately offered to assist me. I thought it was very nice of her to go out of her way and ask some locals if they knew the street that I was looking for. Also, the city itself has a bit of laid-back feel for me which is more to my liking since I come from a laid-back city too. The university (at least the Cathays campus) is well-located near the city center, near my residence. The facilities are also next to each. I had an experience in one of the universities in Europe during my master's program in bioethics where we have to take a bus to go to our classroom, or you can have a choice of walking for at least 30 minutes to catch up with your lecture courses. Imagine, especially for a Filipino who is not accustomed to such weather, walking for 30 minutes during winter to catch an early morning class? Here in Cardiff, I have a course



where the room assignment is literally across the street from my office at SIRC.

Lastly, my first impression with the professors, staff, and fellows of SIRC are they are very friendly, helpful, and professional. These characteristics of the people and institutions, I believe, are necessary for a fruitful and exciting stay here in Cardiff.

Introducing new fellows: Manasi Dutt



Cardiff is a wonderful place. It has a bustling city centre with all the amenities and convenience that one would expect from the capital of Wales, while still retaining some beautiful old architecture and an abundance of greenery that is usually only preserved in smaller towns. The people are incredibly warm and welcoming, especially from the SIRC department, as they go out of their way to ensure

that the new fellows are settling in well.

I am staying in Aberdare Hall, in a building which is over 100 years old but has been updated to provide fast broadband connections to every student in their rooms. This is a perfect example of what the Cardiff university campus and particularly the social science sites are like: historical buildings equipped with the latest technology available, so that you feel as if you have stepped into a history book but are able to comfortably and efficiently carry out your work as well.

The arrangements made by both the social sciences department and the people at SIRC went a long way towards helping me feel settled and confident in the step I took in moving to a new city. Their explanation of the process of completing a PhD and the support that would be available during the next four years meant that

I could start to become excited about the realization of my research plans.

So far, I am finding that the postgraduate diploma in social science research methods, that is a compulsory part of our programme, provides the right blend of research methods and social science theory. Despite having just finished one degree and coming from a social science background, I am truly appreciative of this opportunity to refresh my acquaintance with prominent sociological theorists and also refine my understanding of research methods. Undertaking research at the PhD level is far beyond anything I have attempted before and this programme almost feels like part of the welcoming process, where we can make sure that we are comfortable with all the theories that we will be expected to employ during our fieldwork and subsequently when writing up the thesis.

My own background includes a BA (Hons) in Human Sciences, which is essentially social anthropology, from Durham University. I went on from this to working with a small, niche market research firm for 18 months, before I progressed to an MSc in International Human Resource Management and Comparative Industrial Relations at Manchester Business School. I am intimately acquainted with the shipping industry through my father, who was a seafarer and has continued to work in ship management over the last twenty years. The combination of my social sciences and business background, in addition to my awareness of the shipping industry has led to my interest in issues around the recruitment and retention of seafarers. I would like to explore the impact of culture on the perspectives and expectations of seafarers from different countries in order to determine whether this should have an effect on human resources methods used in the industry.

Based on the wonderful start to this new chapter of my life, I am looking forward to working with like-minded and highly learned individuals in this beautiful city over the next four years.

Introducing new fellows: Sarah Simons

My African cultural Babito Nilotic indigenous African heritage places my ancestors in various and related River Nile inter-lacustrine regions for over centuries. We have always been very enterprising water people whose symbiotic relationship with the lake, sustained our very livelihood. Our very existence as a community has thrived on a rich heritage and consistent maturation of indigenous knowledge for ecologically sustainable management of inland maritime environments in Eastern Africa. For more information visit: http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Buganda_kings_are_Luo_says_Museveni.shtml



good time management skill. Even when I intruded the personal space of passersby a number of times to hastily enquire directions, I never met a wrinkled brow even though I deserved to be shrugged off.

I am now ready to go and look forward to reciprocating Nippon Foundation support with consistent hard work during my study period here. My PhD research is entitled **A Geo-Spatial Analysis of Maritime Piracy along the Eastern Africa coast between 1998-2008.**

In my first days at Cardiff, while groping around for my bearings during registration, induction, banking and locating lecture rooms, the genuinely unpretentious and accommodating Cardiff University and more specifically SIRC staff and fellows helped me to

settle in. Equally, Cardiff city has a warm and almost cosy atmosphere about it. Locals are very polite and helpful. I particularly appreciated when a watchful shop attendant noticed me communicating with a machine by telepathy volunteered to instruct me on how to operate the said machine by paying with a card in supermarkets – a

The only surprise is that Kenyan students are an endangered species at Cardiff University with more graduating than arriving. However, with the excellent postgraduate student support resources I have noticed at the university, I will be sure to highly recommend Cardiff.





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The Nippon Foundation



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Victor on his first tour of Sydney

Profile: Victor Gekara in Australia

In 2004, the SIRC-Nippon Foundation began offering scholarships to students interested in pursuing research on the human element in the maritime industry. Among the first products of this programme, who have already obtained their doctoral degrees in 2008, was Dr. Victor Oyaro Gekara, who is of Kenyan descent.

Soon after finishing his PhD Victor joined SIRC (Seafarers International Research Centre) as a research assistant to work on a specific research project which investigated the use of computers in the assessment of seafarers for licensing purposes. He was motivated to join the Centre by the opportunity to be involved in interesting research and for the advancement it would afford him in terms of research experience. He knew that such experience would be crucial, especially since he was very keen to build an academic career. Victor says that he wanted this career to involve research and teaching in higher education and to build upon his Bachelor of Education degree foundation and a high school teaching experience prior to the PhD.

In March 2009, Victor moved down under; to Melbourne, Australia where he is now a lecturer in Logistics and Supply Chain Management in the School of Management at the RMIT University. He currently teaches international trade at undergraduate level and will be teaching international logistics at the postgraduate level. He describes these two areas as perfect for him because they allow him to incorporate aspects of the global political economy as well as international transportation and shipping operations which are of great interest to him. Clearly, he may have left SIRC but his involvement with the Centre, both as a postgraduate student and research assistant continues to inform his work significantly.

Indeed, his current research work at RMIT builds closely on his earlier work at the centre and clearly his SIRC training is paying dividends. Within a few months at his new station Victor has managed to obtain two research grants; one internal and another external. These two grants will certainly keep him busy for the next twelve months as he develops research on the implications of advanced technology on the labour process within the ports sector and the future of skills in ports in Australia. Victor intends these two projects to form the basis for a bigger Australian Research Council (ARC) grant application. He has also teamed up with colleagues at RMIT (including Prof. Peter Fairbrother, one of his PhD supervisors at Cardiff University) to develop research projects in the area of employment and union organizing within the ports and the wider maritime sector. Let it, however, not sound as if it is all work and no play as his love for nature is taking him to interesting places around sunny Australia!



Victor with his colleagues
at a School planning retreat

M. Kitada Sharing the Research Findings with Female Cadets in Sweden



Momoko Kitada, one of the second cohort of Nippon Fellows, was invited to give a talk about her PhD research, "Women Seafarers and their Identities", to the female cadets at the Department of Shipping and Marine Technology, Chalmers University of Technology (Gothenburg, Sweden) on 18th May 2009. Associate Professor, Margaret Lützhøft, leading the Maritime Human Factors research group at Chalmers, organised the seminar, "Women of the Sea". Approximately 60 people attended this seminar and the majority of them

were female cadets who had been trained onboard ship. Kitada talked about how the occupational culture of seafaring relates to gender issues, and explained the different identity management strategies which women seafarers adopt in order to "survive" both onboard and ashore. Her talk was followed by two other lectures presented by Margareta Ljung, a researcher at Chalmers University of Technology and University West, and Ingrid Kaijser, an ethnologist at the National Maritime Museum. The seminar led to an open discussion and the participants exchanged views and opinions about gender problems, based on their own experience of working onboard ship. This also encouraged the young female cadets to organise a network of women seafarers immediately after the seminar. Momoko Kitada's lecture was also reported in the

Swedish maritime magazine "Shipgaz", August 2009.

