

TEAM: SHUNYA

Date: 4 September, 2022

SUMMARY

Project Ryushi aims to tackle Japan's aging population problem and social reclusiveness through a shared mobility service and policies designed specifically for young immigrants. Under this initiative, the Japanese government will invite foreign youths to live in Japan. Whenever such an immigrant arrives in the country, an old Japanese local (senior volunteer) is matched up with a new young immigrant to exchange the nuances of Japanese culture in return for the caretaking of these volunteers. The immigrant has to undergo five stages: Initiate, Collect, Assign, Train, and Socialize. One of the central components of Project Ryushi is the fully autonomous compact electric vehicle module that is assigned to the immigrant on the first day of arrival. A Japanese-style traditional house inspires the interior of the module with a separate genkan area. The module has an AI-powered Ryushi bot that helps users adapt smoothly to Japan. The bot can project interactive content based on the context.

This initiative will ensure a faster onboarding onto the Japanese culture for these immigrants and a supportive young population to take care of the older population, thus creating a synergic relationship between both stakeholders.

KEYWORDS

Japan, Aging Population, Immigrants, Autonomous, Electric Vehicle, Policy Design, Social Reclusiveness, Shared Mobility, Cultural Exchange, Artificial Intelligence

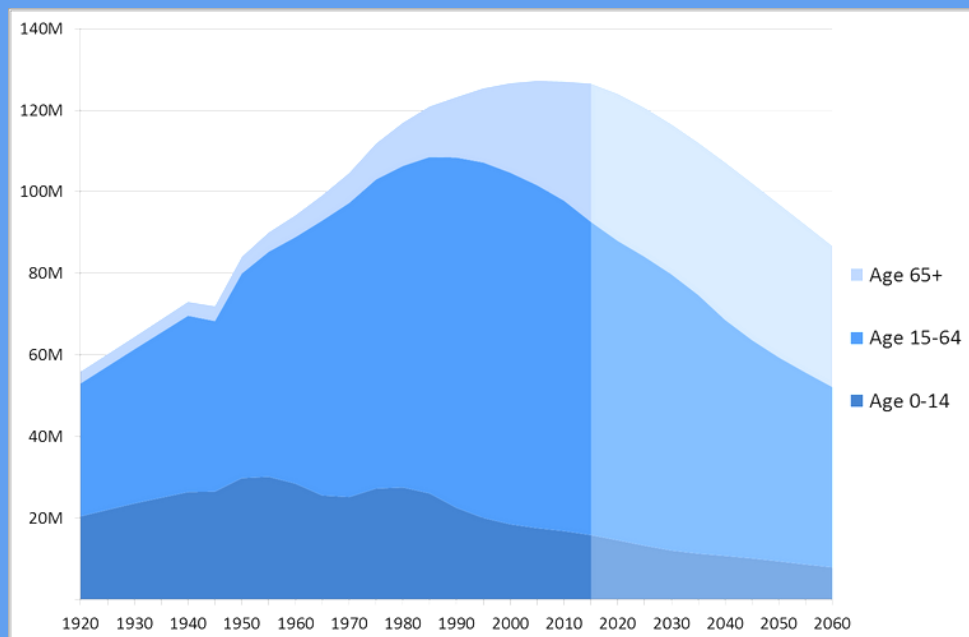
MEMBERS

Anuraag Vasisht | Aakash Mangla | Surya Sathi Roy
National Institute of Design, India

Japan, as a country, has seen a lot of changes throughout the centuries. Only very few nations in the world have such vibrant history to their name. This country was settled by Paleolithic people about 35,000 years ago from mainland of Asia. Japan has been under multiple emperors, samurai warriors, siege, isolation from the entire world, expansion over most of the continent, natural disasters, world war, and even two deadly nuclear bombs. Yet, even after all of this, Japan has stood the test of time, has been resilient and has continued to strive through time and stand out and the top. This has a lot of contribution from the strong Japanese culture that the people of Japan have so carefully preserved to date.

SCENARIO 2040

Japan has been under a lot of stress for the past five years. Global warming has already started showing wrecking worldwide, bringing Earth under a lot of duress. Apart from the environmental issues, what Japan is experiencing has been in talks for more than 50 years now. A sharp population decline has brought the count to only over 100 million people at the start of 2040 after the recent consensus. Even the average age has gone down to 55, bringing the youth to only around 12% of Japan's total population. Multiple talks have been carried out over domestic and international channels to curb this issue in the teeth and bring a more vibrant future for the technological giant Nihon.



Japan's population in three demographic categories (from 1920 to 2010, with projections to 2060) | Source - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aging_of_Japan

There are multiple contributing factors to this. After the pandemic phase of the 2020s, many facets have been impacted. This duration also saw the rise of Hikikomori. Production work in the primary industries has been running efficiently due to the more rigorous integration of AI and automation in industries like construction, FMCG, Automobile, and more. 65% of the population have started receiving their monthly JBI (Japan Basic Income), which changed according to the tier of the cities they live in and their surrounding costs. This covers their basic costs, including essentials, groceries, clothes, and other expenditures; medical expenses are covered by the JHS (Japan Healthcare System). All beneficiaries of the JHS have direct access to medical facilities all over Japan and its partnering countries.

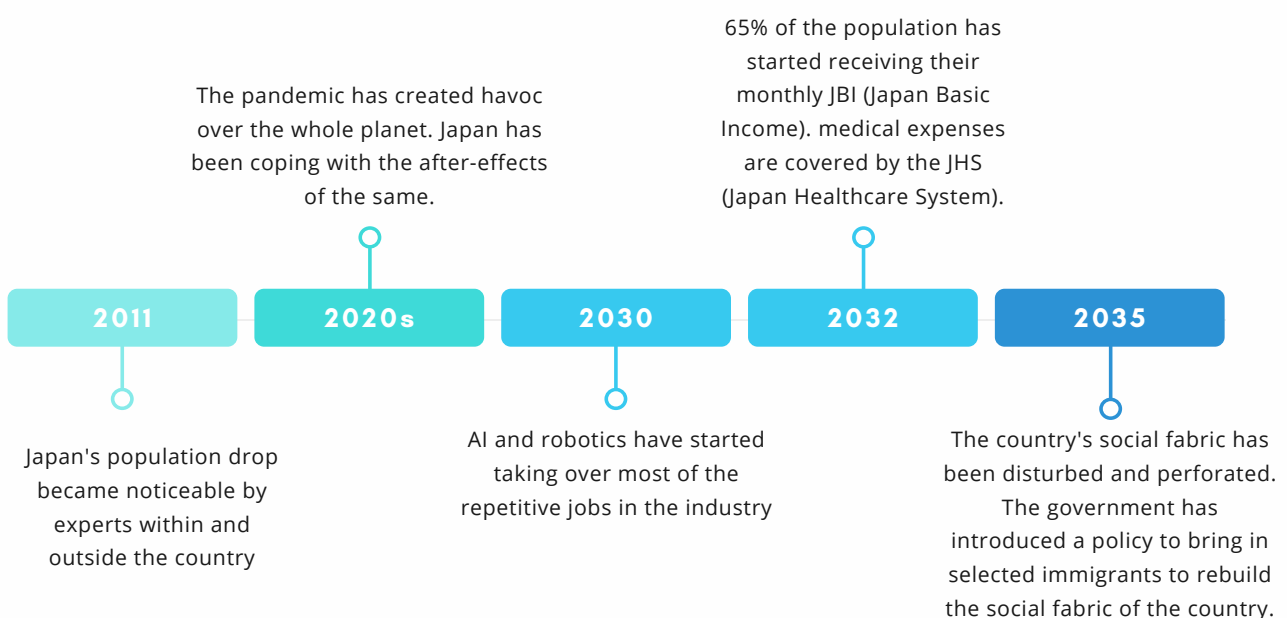
Remote work and automation brought in speed and accuracy but also, on the other side, people in Japan have started living in silos and never really interacting with each other. The country's social fabric has been disturbed and perforated, leaving gaps that the government is struggling to repair. The fall in birth rate and increase in suicide rates have been going up for a few years now. Still, the new problem that stands in the way of Japan has been people interacting with other people rarely, and a country cannot run with its citizens not having social interaction with each other.

"No one can live entirely on their own, nor can any country or society exist in isolation."

- Daisaku Ikeda

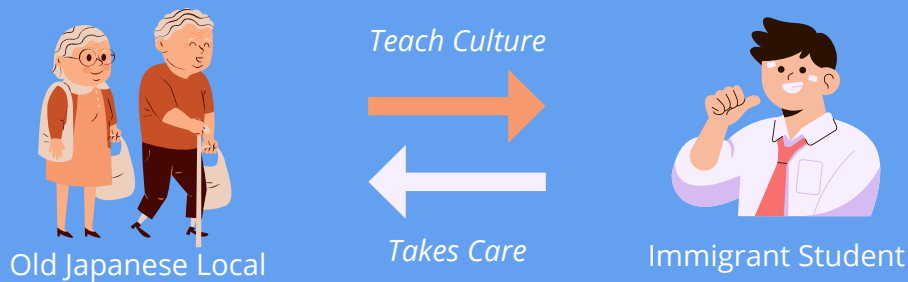
At the start of 2035, the Japanese government and society alike started struggling with issues pertaining to a population that is at an all-time low. This led to the formation of the Global Village Initiative 2035, with countries coming together to join hands and share a centralized skilled talent pool placed around the world. Immigrants can apply to different job profiles or be matched to different opportunities according to their profiles. Barring a few hiccups, most major countries have slowly adapted to these changing dynamics and have guided their companies and agencies to accommodate these Global Village Candidates.

With its enrollment with Global Village Initiative, the Japanese government started receiving many applications from eligible students and young professionals who are planning to study at the best institutions in Japan and work in the best places. But a few years down the line, a lot of reclusiveness started emerging among the immigrants and the locals. Things started on a good note, but what the government soon realized was even though some of them knew the language and were trained well before coming into the country, most of them were not able to understand, adapt or even cope with the culture and relating nuances of Japan as these immigrants were brought up in their own cultural inclinations and practices. Although the current generation of Japan is much more welcoming of immigrants due to rapid globalization, the process of these immigrants becoming a part of society faster becomes paramount to rebuilding the social fabric of Japan.



CONCEPT RYŪSHI

In the summer of 2040, the Japanese government gave the green signal for the Ryushi initiative policy. Under this policy, young students and professionals from partner countries are invited to live in Japan for a longer duration of time. Whenever such an immigrant arrives in the country, an old Japanese local (senior volunteer) is matched up with a new young immigrant to exchange the nuances of culture. This ensured not only a faster onboarding onto the Japanese culture for these immigrants but a supportive young population to take care of the older population of Japan.

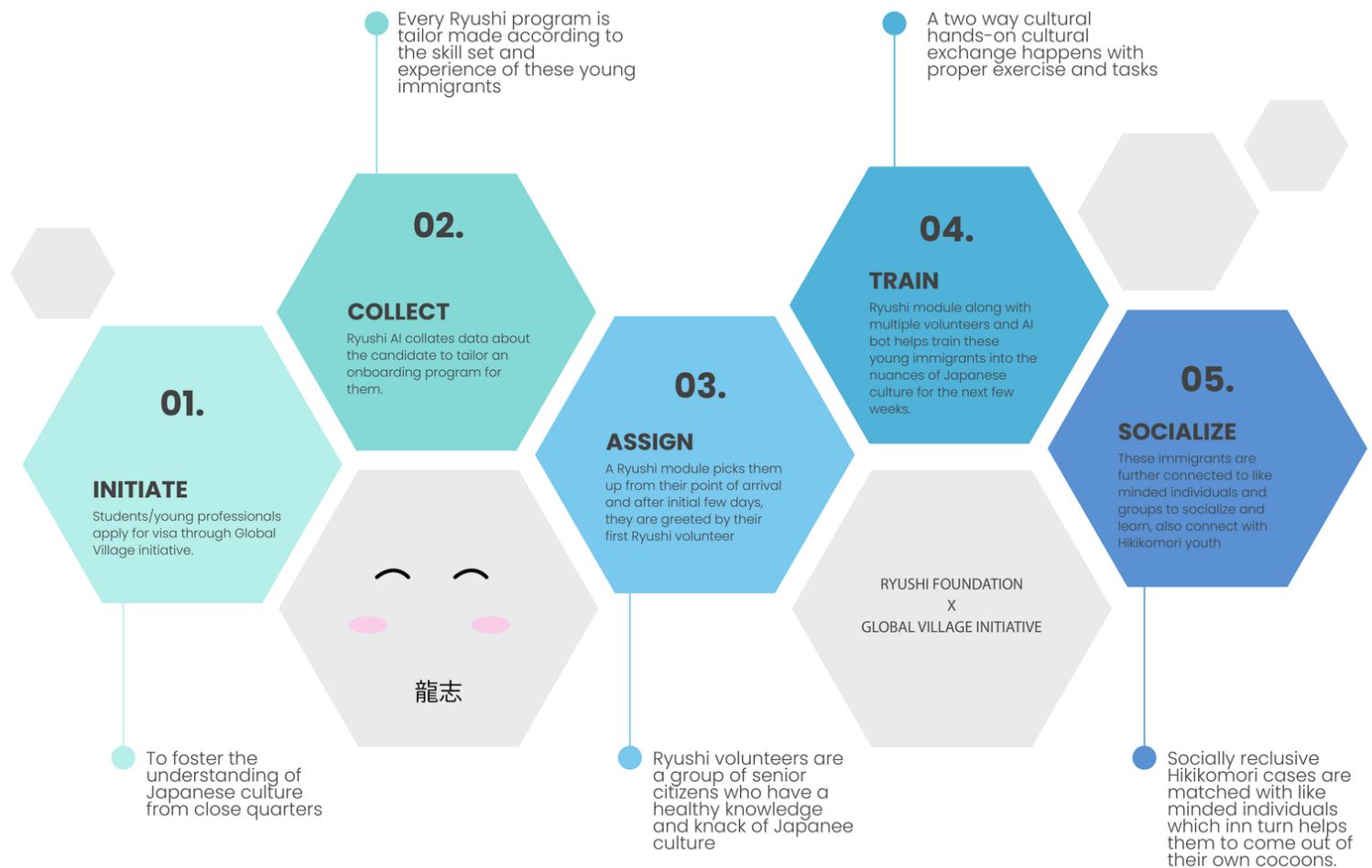


Young students and professionals from partner countries are ideal candidates for this initiative since they are more flexible and, therefore, more likely to adapt to a new culture. The incoming young population will balance Japan's rapidly aging population and revitalize the social fabric. In order to attract these young minds, the Japanese government has formulated various policies under which foreign students are given reserved seats at universities in Japan.

THE FLOW

The basic flow of the Ryushi Initiative is given on the next page, which includes five stages: Initiate, Collect, Assign, Train, and Socialize. Whenever a new immigrant is selected for the Global Villagers X Ryushi initiative program, their data is collected through proper authorized channels of their country of origin. A personalized program according to their purpose of visit and the culture and nuances of the city they will be residing in is prepared by the Ryushi A.I. before they arrive in the country. Once they arrive here in Japan, the Ryushi module (which comes with the same Ryushi A.I.) is specifically assigned to them, which picks them up directly from their point of arrival. After a day or two of the initial introduction, they are assigned a senior volunteer. Ryushi module is a fully autonomous purpose-built electric vehicle. It allows the immigrant and the senior volunteer to travel together during a fixed time suitable for both of them.

The volunteer and the immigrant follow the 4-6-8-10 week program with a one-hour-long daily session set by the AI and start exchanging notes on culture and society with the help of AI. The program regime begins from Day 1 itself, helping them interact with the local crowd, understand specific cultural nuances and blend into the Japanese public, which they will soon call home. Different avatars and levels help these immigrants integrate into their surroundings with time, almost acclimatizing them to the local culture. The immigrants may be paired with different volunteers from different genders, professional levels, or interests according to what stage they are in their acclimatization journey.



A Japanese-style traditional house inspires the interior of the Ryushi module with a separate genkan area. It can accommodate two users allowing them to face each other and sit in seiza for better interaction. The module comes with an AI-powered Ryushi bot. There is a retractable table on which the A.I. bot can project the content between the two users. This projection depends on the context and is interactive by nature.

Ryushi's user interface has been designed to provide clear communication between participants based on their profiles. In addition to the projection on the table, Ryushi can also be controlled by voice commands. This program is available in various languages and accommodates the users' needs.

The whole module is designed symmetrically to use fewer parts and resources. Multiple Ryūshi can be parked together to double up as social spaces where these immigrants can interact with each other to further pass on the collected knowledge. This arrangement of multiple Ryushis can also act as a space where they can connect with someone from their home countries whenever they feel a little homesick.

END