

## Aspiring to Study at an Advanced AIDS Research Facility and Contribute to My Home Country

Ramirez Valdez, Kristel Paola

Doctoral Course in Medical Sciences, Graduate School of Medical Sciences

Ms. Ramirez Valdez Kristel Paola came to Kumamoto from Guatemala in 2010 and is now studying HIV antibodies.

She says she wants to work to prevent HIV infection and for the psychological care of HIV patients in Guatemala in the future.



Extracting an antibody producing cell from the blood of HIV patients to study nurturing well conditioned antibodies. "I will continue this research for the development of a practical HIV vaccine," says Ms. Ramirez.

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## Dreaming the Revitalization of Laos at Kumamoto's Most Academic Place

Prathoumxay, Sousada

Master's Course in Public Policy Studies, Graduate School of Social and Cultural Sciences

Ms. Prathoumxay Sousada from Laos, came to Kumamoto in 2009. Studying and contemplating on the city planning of Japan in Yufuin, the area which resembles her home country, she wishes to make use of what she has learned here for the development of her home country.



Ms. Sousada in front of the Memorial Hall of the Fifth High School, her favorite place at Kumamoto University

### ■ Meeting with a mother with HIV/AIDS motivated me to become a researcher

“After finishing high school, I studied microbiology and biochemistry at University of San Carlos in Guatemala. I met a young HIV-positive mother when I was an intern at a hospital. This motivated me to study HIV. She had lost her husband to AIDS and was raising two kids on her own. She was worried more about the possibility that her kids might be socially alienated or abused, than about herself dying of AIDS. It is important to establish the prevention of and cure for AIDS, but it is also necessary to approach it in more social perspective in order to eliminate discrimination and various other problems accompanying the disease. I knew Kumamoto University had an independent research facility for HIV and AIDS, where various research is conducted, and decided to come here on a scholarship from the Ministry of Education.”

### ■ Learning something new every day at Kumamoto University, the frontier of HIV/AIDS research

“The Researcher Training Program for Suppression of AIDS, where I study, is designated as a Global COE Program\* of the Ministry of Education and allows advanced research in a favorable environment. What I usually do here is check AIDS antibodies in a cell under a microscope, discuss the latest papers on AIDS with colleagues, and listen to the stories from the professor, who is taking care of HIV patients as a doctor, among other things. Every day brings new things to study.”

“The professors and colleagues in my laboratory

share the same sense of purpose and are very friendly. Technical Specialist Ms. Yoko Kawanami is especially supportive. She not only helps us with research, but also with many other things from finding an apartment to needlework. She is like our mother in Kumamoto”.

“I want to build on what I’ve learned here and be engaged in the prevention and cure of AIDS as well as the psychological care of the patients suffering from the disease in Guatemala in the future.”

\* Global COE Program: One of the programs initiated by the Ministry of Education, to intensively support international facilities for research and education. Kumamoto University has received assistance through the program in the following categories: Global Education and Research Center Aiming at the Control of AIDS, Global Human Resource Training Unit for Cell-Fate Regulation Research, and Global Initiative Center for High-Rate Impulse-Energy Engineering.



Ms. Yoko Kawanami – whom Ms. Ramirez calls her mother in Kumamoto – says about Ms. Ramirez, “She is more polite than Japanese people and has a passionate heart!”

Excerpted from “Kumadai Tsushin” Vol. 46, 2012 Autumn

### ■ Entered the graduate school of Kumamoto University to study various aspects of Japan

“In high school, I received a scholarship from the Kumamoto–Laos Friendship Association and attended an educational and well-equipped high school in Vientiane. The chairman of the association was the former Ambassador to Laos and was originally from Kumamoto. When he asked me if I would like to learn about Japan in Kumamoto, I was motivated and decided to come to Kumamoto.”

“First, I studied Japanese at a language school, but I wanted to study not only the language but also Japan’s culture, economy, law and other subjects and decided to enter the Graduate School of Kumamoto University. My major is public policy, and I specifically focus on the city planning of Yufuin in my research.”

“Yufuin is a country area surrounded by rice fields and farms, which is similar to my hometown. I wondered why so many tourists, the annual number of whom is double the number of the local population, are attracted to this small town, and I started my research with the hope that I could learn some hints for the revitalization of Laos.”

“I investigate the city planning of Yufuin by interviewing people at the town office, hotels and inns, and also by reading the regulations on building and city development to examine successful outcomes and problems that arose.”

### ■ Inspired by the historic atmosphere of Kumamoto University

“When I first came to Kumamoto University, I was amazed by the historic atmosphere of the

Red Gate (Akamon) and the prominent Memorial Hall of the Fifth High School. This is a school where Natsume Soseki taught, and the current professors all have outstanding academic backgrounds. I remember I got excited to think I came to the most academic place in Kumamoto.”

“My favorite place in Kumamoto is Amakusa. Since Laos is located inland, the sea is a special place for everyone in the country. I had never eaten sashimi before coming here, but now I am so fond of it that I go to Kokai Shopping Street to buy konoshiro fish and clean and eat it at home.”

“In the future, I want to return to Laos and use the knowledge and Japanese ability I gained here to contribute to the development of Laos.”

Excerpted from “Kumadai Tsushin” Vol. 47, 2013 Winter

熊本散歩

A Walk In Kumamoto  
Information of Kumamoto

#### Amakusa

A true “treasure island” encompassed on all sides by beautiful sea, Amakusa is a popular destination for boat tours that offer close-up viewing of the wild dolphins inhabiting coastal waters. The chance of encountering Amakusa’s dolphins is an amazing 98%! Fresh and delicious seafood is another of the area’s delights.

