

WETSKILLS JAPAN 2025 — MY UNFORGETTABLE JOURNEY

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By: Altracia Michael

Blog Banner



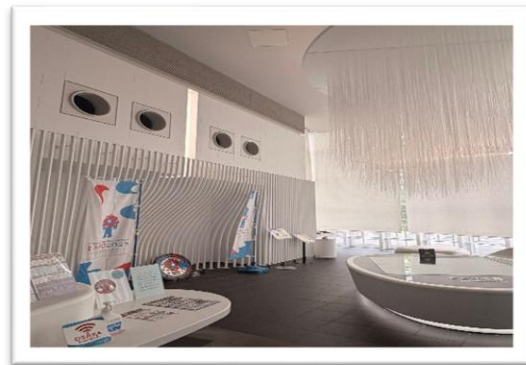
When I landed in Osaka, stepping into the glow of the city and the unfamiliar sounds around me, I felt one thing above everything else: grateful. Japan has been on my bucket list for years and being able to experience it not as a tourist but as a representative of **HZ University of Applied Sciences** and **Wavemakers United** in the **Wetskills Programme** felt almost unreal. It was the kind of moment where you stop and think, *“This is really happening.”*

On the first day, we had a kick-off session which started with a small meet and greet for everyone. Here, we had a team building activity “photo-story” where everyone shared an image from the past 14 days and the story behind it. Someone shared a hiking moment with their brother a simple picture, but one that revealed personality, family, and joy. It set the tone for the entire program: open, curious, and full of life.

Later that evening, we headed to a karaoke bar and that’s when the real bonding started. We sang loudly, laughed easily, shared food, and discovered that so many of us had the same taste in music. It didn’t feel stiff or awkward; it felt like a group of people who already knew each other.



The following day, we visited the **Osaka City Sewerage Science Museum**, which instantly became one of the most fascinating places I've seen. Coming from a small island, seeing advanced water technology firsthand was eye-opening. The museum was fully interactive with QR code translations, animated screens, immersive walls, and a cute stamp booklet you filled as you moved from zone to zone.



I learned just how deeply Osaka thinks about water: daily household consumption, water reuse strategies, and how personal behaviour impacts sustainability. But the highlight was the **drones** used in sewage tunnels for monitoring and inspection a level of technological precision that amazed me.

We later toured a wastewater treatment plant Niwakubo Filtration Plant where everything from the museum was demonstrated in real life. Watching each stage of treatment helped me understand how Japan maintains such efficient wastewater systems in dense urban environments.



Then came the **Crazy 88 Challenge**, a night full of energy and laughter. Osaka became the backdrop of our team-building adventure, Dotonbori, Osaka Station, and even the area around the Umeda Sky Building. We completed hilarious challenges like singing “I’m a Barbie Girl,” finding an item for exactly 1,000 Japanese yen, and taking a photo in front of 7-Eleven. Though we didn’t win, the memories felt like a win on their own.



After that, we shifted into case work. My team **Paul, Rudolf, Wouter, and myself** worked seamlessly together. I served as creative director for poster and researcher, focusing on socio-economic aspects. Our concept? A **flushless wastewater system** for a futuristic city, designed to separate waste at the source, reduce water consumption, convert solid waste into electricity, and use wetlands for ecological reuse. Our case holder encouraged innovation while helping us stay grounded the perfect balance.

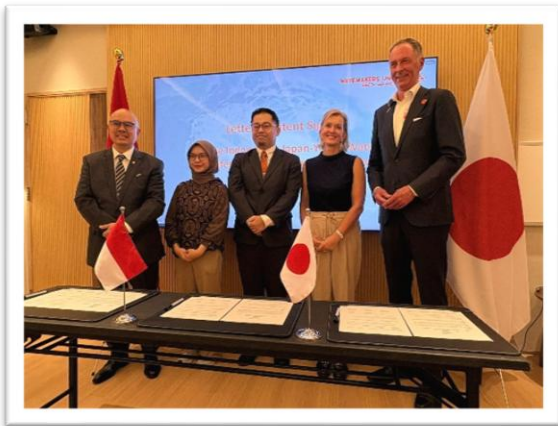


Amidst the technical work, we also had cultural learning days. We participated in an **origami workshop**, attended a talk from a Japanese education specialist, and listened to guest speakers who shared insights into Japanese innovation, culture, and sustainability.



During the weekend, a small group of us visited **Kyoto**, explored the city, watched a basketball game, tasted new foods, and experienced Japan’s bullet train a 15-minute ride that left me impressed once again by the country’s efficiency.

A few days later came one of the most memorable moments of the program. **Before pitch day began**, we gathered at the **Indonesia Pavilion** at the World Expo to witness the official **Wave Indonesia to Wave Japan signing**.



The atmosphere was powerful youth leaders, professionals, and innovators all gathered for a symbolic, forward-looking moment. Watching Tilly, the CEO of Wavemakers United, speak with genuine passion about the future of water and youth involvement left a lasting impact on me.

Immediately afterward, we shifted into pitch preparation mode. Our final presentations took place at the **Dutch Pavilion** during the Wavemakers “Future is Now” event. Presenting our concept to professionals, experts, and leaders from around the world was nerve-wracking but incredibly rewarding. At one point, I was selected to pitch during a table activity which was such a proud moment.

We explored several Expo pavilions such as the Dutch, Italian, Indonesian, Canadian, and the Commons Pavilion, which meant the most to me.

This part of the experience became even more inspiring when I learned the World Expo hosted 158 nations and regions, with dozens of small and developing countries showcased across various pavilion types. Seeing my home country apart of the Commons Pavilion meant standing among some of the world’s most overlooked but resilient nations, each telling their unique story.



The World Expo welcomed a total of approximately **25.5 million people** throughout its run. Seeing the scale of the global audience around me, hundreds of thousands of visitors in one day, millions over the full event made the moment even more profound. To stand there as a young Caribbean student, representing my university and my field, felt truly bigger than me. As someone from a tiny island nation, seeing my region represented at such a massive, global platform made me emotional and inspired.

Throughout the entire journey, I saw how **Wavemakers United** creates opportunities for young professionals from all backgrounds to participate in global conversations about water. **HZ University** plays a huge role in preparing students to take part in programs like these, and protentional collaboration with Foundations such as the **Nishihara Foundation** which could possibly aid with scholarship opportunities for students. It shows just how much potential there is for future students to travel, engage, and grow internationally.

Japan taught me gratefulness, humility, and mindfulness. It strengthened my academic drive and reminded me why I chose engineering to one day contribute to sustainable water solutions in my own country and beyond.

To **HZ University, Wavemakers United**, the organizers, the experts, and my teammates: thank you. Thank you for believing in young professionals and creating spaces where our voices matter.

This wasn't just a trip. It was a pivot, a moment that shaped my perspective and expanded my world.

