

## Japanese community in Mongar: Cultural integration and knowledge sharing

At first glance, it's difficult to tell them apart: they look the same as the local people, they eat *ema datsi*, and some of them even converse effortlessly in *sharchop*. It is impressive how a small Japanese community comprising of JOCVs and JICA experts have comfortably fit into the mosaic of the larger local community in Mongar. While some have been living in Mongar for the past 8 years, others have only been there a month.

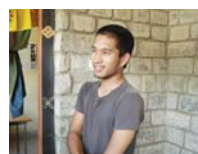


About 12 kms away from Mongar town, amidst the beautiful lush pear trees and rice fields of Renewable Natural Resources Research Centre, at Wengkar, one will find JICA experts, Mr. Yuichi Tomiyasu (Chief Advisor/Horticulturist), Mr. Toyozo Tanaka (Rice Cultivation Expert), and Ms. Yasuko Yoshizawa (Project Coordinator/Extension Specialist). The team is part of the project for "Agriculture Research and Extension Support in Lhuntse and Mongar". Their hard work and dedication is very much visible



from the contended faces of national researchers and warm words of appreciation by the neighbourhood farmers.

Mr. Terumasa Kitayama, JOCV, (PE Instructor) in Mongar Lower Secondary School and Ms. Yuka Aida, JOCV, (Neonatal ICU Nurse) in Mongar Regional Referral hospital have been dispatched just three weeks ago. However, they are already actively involved in their school/hospital duties. Currently, Mr. Kitayama is following his Bhutanese counterpart, so they can coordinate and learn from each other, and take turns teaching PE classes. This reciprocity between JOCVs and their counterparts is of utmost importance. Ms. Aida works alongside another nurse in the neonatal ICU, she has picked up a few essential hospital-related phrases in *sharchop* such as "Don't move, I am going to give you an injection."



Teaching basic knowledge of computer software and applications in Mongar Higher Secondary School, impeccably dressed in *Kira*, is JOCV Ms. Hiromi Takei (IT Instructor). In addition to instructing students, she also plays an integral role in fixing problems in the network and computers in the school computer lab. In the past 9 months of her assignment, she has also been going to other schools in the region to solve computer-related problems.

At RNR Research Sub-Centre, Limithang is young and cheerful Mr. Taihei Yasuda (JOVC Vegetable Cultivation). He arrived 6 months ago and has been busy observing the farmers' method of vegetable cultivation, as well as sharing the new technologies being promoted by the research centre. Mr. Yasuda loves the 40°C plus heat and the *ema datsi* of Limithang.



These JOCVs and JICA experts have proven that by integrating themselves into the local community, they can make life at Mongar comfortable and transfer of knowledge and skills very effective.

### JICA schemes

- ◆ Technical Cooperation Projects
- ◆ Grant Aid
- ◆ Training Programmes
- ◆ Development Studies
- ◆ Emergency Disaster Relief
- ◆ Citizen Participation
- ◆ Follow-up Cooperation

### JICA target areas in Bhutan

- ◆ Agriculture and rural development
- ◆ Infrastructure development
- ◆ Local governance
- ◆ Social services development (health, education and IT)

### JICA members in Bhutan as of Aug

- ◆ JICA office staff: 16  
(7 internationals; 7 nationals)
- ◆ Experts: 7
- ◆ Senior Volunteers: 20
- ◆ JOCVs: 29

## JOCV Activity : Music, laughter and physical education in Trashiyangtse



There is loud, upbeat music blasting in the school playground, and PP students from Trashiyangtse Lower Secondary School (TYLSS) are all ready for their PE class. Then from the direction of the music speaker, their PE Instructor, JOCV Mr. Kensaku Seki briskly runs over to them and instructs them in *Dzongkha* to start their PE routine. The kids excitedly follow the PE drills to the beat of the music.

Watching Mr. Seki and his students, completely engaged in their PE steps for the next 20 minutes, you cannot help but get affected by their enthusiasm and level of energy. Mr. Seki employs innovative methods to make PE fun and appealing to the kids. For instance, he showed his students how to make colorful plastic rings out of scrap/junk materials, so that they could be used for their throwing drills.

Ever since Mr. Seki became a part of the school faculty, people's perception of Physical Education has changed, "before the concept of PE was just to play, people didn't understand the importance of PE drills and the benefits derived from PE activity," says Mr. Mani Tshering, the Principal of the school.

In addition to teaching PE classes, Mr. Seki meets and collaborates with new NIE graduates from other schools to organize sports activities and events. Mr. Seki has been working in TYLSS for the past year and a half. Since he has been such an active member of the school, it is evident that he will be greatly missed by his peers and students when he completes his term.



## News in Brief

- ◆ The JICA Alumni Association of Bhutan (JAAB) organized a reforestation event on 19 July above the Tandhi Ney in Thimphu. The area was marked by the Department of Forestry for reforestation after it was devastated by forest fire in 2005. The members of JAAB, JICA office and volunteers from the Royal Institute of Health Science in Thimphu planted more than 300 saplings of oak and blue pine. The Department of Forestry provided the saplings. It is a regular and important annual activity of JAAB to plant trees to contribute to the promotion of environment. The Resident Representative who attended the tree planting said, "it is the responsibility of the present generation to hand over clean and livable environment to the future generation and one of the most simple way is by planting trees".
- ◆ Short-term Senior Volunteer Mr. Hiroyuki Mori arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008 for a two-month assignment. He is working as a Weather Forecast expert at the Department of Energy, MoEA in Thimphu.



### For more information

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