



60 years
Japan's Official Development Assistance

“JICA and the Millennial Generation”

TOP 20 Outstanding Essays

JICA ESSAY WRITING CONTEST 2014



DUMANAY MEETS JICA

Angel Joy Orpilla, First Place
Tabuk City National High School



Barefoot, Dumanay labored with each careful step along the path of the slippery mountain slope. It had rained hard the night before; the water-soaked trail that she now traversed had become a great obstacle in her desire to reach their elementary school.

It must have been thirty minutes ago when, just at the break of day, she left home for school. "I guess I still have to walk for another hour to reach school," Dumanay thought as her petite feet continued in arduous travel. She, too, felt the native back-pack, full of school materials and her packed lunch food, propped against her back become heavier with load as time passed.

She finally reached school just barely in time. Heavy with sweat, she was able to heave a big sigh of relief as school bell tolled the appointed time.

Many of Dumanay's schoolmates were similarly placed. The lucky few were only those whose houses were nearby.

When the school bell rang to end the school day, Dumanay yet faced again the same struggle she endured in the morning. Yet she was full of character, a spirit unbroken despite the ravages of daily rigor.

Back at home, Dumanay helped her Mom with the washing of the dishes after they had partaken of their meal of rice and vegetables. The sun had just set and the creeping darkness in their home was soon illuminated by an improvised gas lamp.

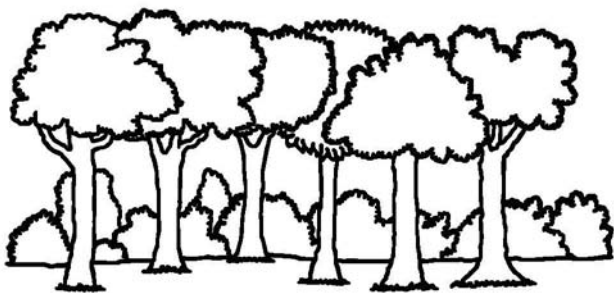
Dumanay lit another one and proceeded to a roughly-made wooden table; she brought out her tattered book, paper and pencil and begun work on her school assignment. The shadows in the dimly-lit home danced to the sway of the gas-lamp fire; the cicadas started their nightly ritual.

With her school homework done, Dumanay eased the gnawing tension from her body; this was to say that the day is done. With the tension released, sleep came not long after. Sleep a welcome medicine to the pains of extreme labor; early tomorrow begins anew the daily struggle.

In this remote mountain village where Dumanay lived, houses clung close to each other. This is why it is called a tribal village. People here live off the fat of their swidden farm or uma high up in the mountains, their payaw or rice terraces, and whatever game their hunting expeditions bring. Life, then, is hard; poverty a reality to contend with.

It is for this reason that Dumanay values much education. In her youthful mind, she dreams of that day in the future when she could help her family live a life with much less deprivation. And she knows that only by finishing college and having a stable job will she be able to make life better for her and her family.

A few years later, when Dumanay was in sixth grade, construction workers came to build a road which passed by their school. Not long after, construction work started in the river below; she came to know that they were building a micro-hydro there.



Dumanay found out from her teacher that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded these works. She said that through Japan's kindness, life for the people in the community would now be much better.

Dumanay experienced this herself. For one, she now can get to school much faster and conveniently. Gone were the days of dangerous travel along slippery mountain trails. More so, their home now boasts of electric light at night. A lone bulb, with non-flickering light, has replaced the improvised gas lamp. She now can study at night much better and with much less eye strain.

The road, too, has greatly helped the community. People now have gone into planting many vegetable crops as their produce can now be transported for sale in the market. The sick needing hospitalization can speedily be given medical attention. Needed goods, unavailable in the community, can now be bought at a cheaper price. One household, too, started a small convenience store.

Dumanay, in her young age, noticed all these improvements. "Even the behavior of the people has changed," she thought. "They can now afford a smile on their faces; it seems that they now are more confident in facing the challenges of the future."

Dumanay went on to finish college. She took up a course in Community Development in the state university. When asked why she chose such course, she replied, "People in this world cannot survive if they do not learn to help each other. This is the valuable lesson that JICA has taught us."

Dumanay went back to her home village. There, she was able to organize a cooperative with the villagers. She also assisted the people in identifying projects needed by the community, prepared project proposals from these, and submitted the same to funding agencies. Not all proposals were approved but those which were successful were implemented and helped in making life better for the residents.

A project of great impact that Dumanay initiated was the reforestation of a 150-hectare barren area of land where now stands, after 10 years, a lush growth of forest pines that has greatly improved the landscape of their tribal community.

“Trees are the lungs of the earth,” Dumanay always echoes to the community people, young and old alike. “It cleans the bad gases in the air.”

Surely, the generations yet to come will always salute the exemplary works that Dumanay bequeathed to them. And, through it all, it was JICA’s works that kindled the passion to serve in the heart of the youthful Dumanay.

THE INGREDIENTS FOR A BETTER WORLD

Luis Antonio Valdez, Second Place
South Hill School, Incorporated



The Philippines has faced a plethora of problems this past decade. Ranging from serious natural disasters to political crimes, and even rebellious uprisings; we have faced very tough times recently. Despite these problems, however, international cooperation is ever-present and has done many good things for us.

It was raining heavily at night. I was preparing for another day of school, another day to learn and discover new things. Suddenly, my family and I heard the news on the television – classes were suspended. The culprit was excessive flooding in many areas in the province, especially areas around Laguna de Bay, the country’s largest lake. It was a day that was meant for school, a day that was meant for discovery, wasted because of this problem. My education was being hindered as I was denied a day of learning. The next morning, I watched in shock and worry as the television broadcasted live footage of flooding in countless areas around the region, and reports about dead and missing people soon showed up.

This has happened not only once, but dozens of times. I, and I suspect many others, are tired of this routine that frequently occurs every year.

Not only is my education, along with the education of thousands of other young people, hindered, but the lives of many are endangered at the same time. Flooding around the area puts people's lives in danger and forces them to leave their homes. Thankfully, our government, with the support our friends at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), have devised a project that shall help us handle this problem more effectively: A three-year project entitled "Enhancing Resiliency through Community Participatory Flood Observation for Laguna Lake Basin".

This ambitious, three-year project aims to create an early warning system around Laguna de Bay, consisting of web cameras, a mobile e-mail notification system, and warning sirens. This system will alert residents living in the area around the lake of floods, potentially saving thousands of lives.

Many lessons that were learned from 2011's Great East Japan Disaster, as well as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, will be implemented in this project. In 2004, the government of Indonesia issued a public warning on television. There was one problem to this plan, however: Most of the areas that were in danger had no access to electricity. As a result, the public warnings did very little to minimize the casualties of the disaster, which claimed over 150,000 lives.

In 2011, during the Great East Japan Disaster, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) predicted that a 3-meter high tsunami would hit Japan; however, they underestimated the size of the tsunami that struck, which stood as tall as 10 meters high.

This mistake resulted in a slow evacuation that cost over 15,000 lives. The lessons learned from this event will allow both nations to benefit from this project, helping the Philippines develop and apply the system more effectively and, in turn, helping Japan observe what has changed since the system was first developed. With this cooperation, the friendship between Japan and the Philippines, one that has lasted for decades, is strengthened, improving the relations between these two nations.



This is not all, however. More lessons will be learned from this project, which can be used to aid other nations in need. As a result, in the long run, strong friendships and positive relations can be formed all around the globe. This is all thanks to the cooperation that happens when projects such as this one occur.

Still, international cooperation alone cannot make progress occur. It alone cannot lead us to a better world. There are a few more ingredients to the equation -- ingredients that lie within us, the citizens of this nation. The things that are needed of us are the initiative and discipline of the youth.

In order to keep these projects from becoming irrelevant decades from now, I, as a young citizen, will have to spread awareness and practice discipline. Spreading the word about what projects JICA and the national government have been initiating will motivate others to fulfill their responsibilities regarding these various, wonderful projects.

Even things as trivial as properly disposing trash or conserving electricity will provide more benefits than simply environmental ones; it would also let other people – including future generations – reap the benefits of the hard work done by the government and organizations such as JICA.

Let us look at this flood early warning project, as an example. According to the research paper “Achieving Natural Disaster Business Success by Developing Clients and Community: Lessons from Local Leading Companies in Nagaoka City, Japan” by Kurokawa Kiyoto, even after early warning devices are implemented, people should still have the initiative to understand the dangers of a flood, as well as how to prevent one and how to prepare for one, on their own.

This shall further minimize the amount of casualties when a flood strikes. I can help the people understand all these things by spreading the word and increasing awareness. By doing so, I can potentially save lives and reduce casualties.



Now let us take a look at discipline. Something as simple as proper disposal of trash can minimize the effects of flood. Even a single person – even a young student in school – can change everything.

In school, one student disposes of his trash not by throwing it away in a trash container, but by throwing it away in drainage canals. His fellow students see this and quickly assume that this practice is safe and harmless, so they too start disposing of trash the same way. This effect can spread throughout the entire community, as other people see the practice of improper disposal of trash.

Soon, this trash can accumulate and clog the drainage canals, and this can result in a great, disastrous flood that becomes far more serious than if these people practiced proper waste disposal. People die and lose their homes in a great flood that swallows entire towns. If it were not for that single person that began the chain, it is very well possible that none of this would have happened.

Discipline was seen during Japan's time of crisis, during the 2011 Great East Japan Disaster. Evacuees were willing to wait for hours for relief goods. In times where the basic necessities of life – things such as food and water – were hard to find, there was no looting, no impatience, and no chaos.

This helped the fast and steady recovery of the nation, and within a year, any remaining signs that Japan went through such a horrendous disaster were minimal.

Initiative and discipline can go a long way in preventing things from happening. These two things ensure that the efforts of the government, as well as organizations such as JICA, will be worthwhile in the long run. If we can all somehow practice initiative and discipline, spreading awareness and doing what we know will benefit all of society, I can imagine seeing a scenario like this in the future.

It rains heavily at night. My children prepare for another day at school, another day to learn and discover new things. Fortunately, the heavy rain does not stop my children from going to school the next day and learning things they have not known before. The early warning system developed for Laguna de Bay works flawlessly and alerts people of approaching floods.

Thanks to the people's awareness regarding the dangers of a flood, in addition to them doing the right thing, the effects of floods are reduced to an absolute minimum. At the end of the day, no one is harmed by the intense rainfall or flooding, and the people continue going about their normal lives.

If the practice of healthy international cooperation continues, and we citizens, especially us young people, continue practicing discipline, I can see a bright future for us all. Even as we boast an entire feast of problems plaguing us, international cooperation, as well as discipline, shall help us create a better nation and a better world.

A PERMANENT PIECE OF HOME: JICA

Katherine Anne del Rosario, Third Place
Cavite National Science High School



The name of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is one that, in my school, is mentioned with familiarity, with ease, and at times, with reverence. JICA is one of the most well known organizations in our campus because of the impact one of its projects has made on our schooling.

JICA constructed a building consisting of five rooms, not counting the comfort rooms, in my school – without which, my life as a student would have been quite difficult.

Our JICA building, affectionately called “JICA” by the students, sits snugly behind a line of trees and in front of our basketball court, by a path leading from the school gates.

It has a homey feel to it and is home to our school's Research Lab, Teacher's Library, Learning Resources Center, Munting Museo (Mini Museum), and a pair of comfort rooms.

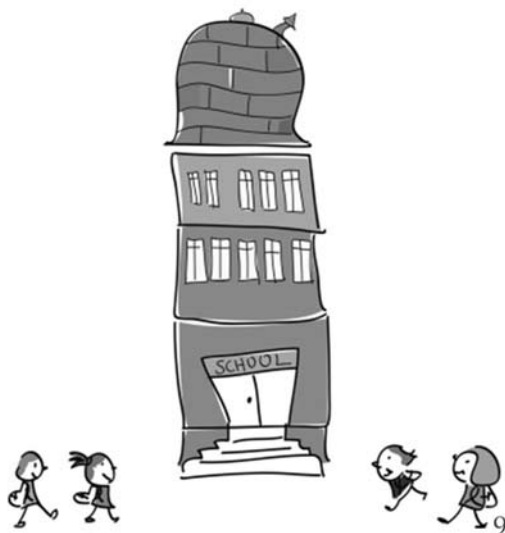
This edifice is a certified go-to for our award-winning researchers as it holds the key to various books, references, lab equipment, and the other ABC's one needs in Research.

It is also where most of the trophies won by our alumni sit, shining and unforgotten. The Munting Museo guides one through the school's history and past accomplishments. It also boasts of an array of authentic artifacts that have significant meaning to the Philippine history.

Back in 2012, I had my interview to apply for my school in the JICA building. It was only my third time stepping onto school grounds, the other two times being the first two screenings I had to take. I was still getting the hang of walking down the old pavement in front of the JICA building, for it seemed almost foreign – alien – underneath my rubber soles.

I took my first steps on the building with a slight tremor in my legs for I wanted to be admitted into this high school so badly. I stopped to take a deep breath, and in through my nose wafted the scent of fresh paint. It calmed me somewhat - the knowledge that I was not the only one new here.

I stepped in the library – which, I learned later on, was actually called the Learning Resources Center – and was greeted by the cool, air-conditioned air.



And it probably helped all the other students, too. See, the JICA is much more than just a building to us. It is a part of home.

One time, in our Science sophomore class, our teacher said with a sly smile, "This building is actually immune to earthquakes." Of course, we were awestruck. How could a structure as simple as this withstand the power of a quake?

She then discussed, in detail, about how the JICA was actually assembled and foldable. That upon bringing it into our campus, several men had to assemble its walls and roof in order to make it what it is right now – a small task compared to the daunting challenge that is constructing an actual building with frames, drills, and the whole shebang. "So in case of an earthquake, you guys know where to run." She added.

It has been years since the JICA building was delivered and assembled in our campus. It is home to several hundred books, around ten to twenty shelves of trophies, hours of laughter, of research, of hard work. In its rooms, there have been triumph, chagrin, stress, and celebration. The memories that it helps us students make are endless. The building has always been, in a word, beautiful.

But as the years go by, the students never neglect to make the most out of the JICA. It is regularly renovated and repainted. Almost quarterly, students do a clean-up in its rooms. Its equipment are well taken care of, its floors always spotless. We strive to bring out the best in it, as it always has brought out the best in us.

The JICA building has stood in my school for over a decade. And I know with utmost certainty that it will keep standing in our campus with decades more to come. It will have more books, more lab equipment, and more trophies. But it will always be the same JICA where our researchers spend their wee hours.

It will always be my first choice in deciding where to go in case of an earthquake. It will always be that bizarre, assembled building that runs from near the gate all the way to the back of the school. There will always be students who will clean it every single day, dusting every table top and shelf.

I could already picture myself as an alumna – walking into the school, feeling invigorated and free after experiencing four years in the jungle known as high school. I would look at the JICA building, and feel a twinge of sentiment.

It has always been, after all, a part of home.

MANEUVERING WITH VELOCITY: SPEED AND DIRECTION IN PROGRESS THROUGH JICA

Krystel Iris de Castro, Fourth Place
Recto Memorial National High School



Just like a “wiper”.

On heavy rains, we seldom spot a car speedy on a highway. Roads become accidentprone; drivers lose direction brought about by a vague view of the path undertaken. Fog occupies the windshields and obscures the vision of the surroundings. During these times of visual obstruction do “wipers” enter the scene. Without the “wipers”, the path remains unclear and identifying directions would be difficult. And if a car has its windshield “wiper”, our community has Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Now that our municipality is in pursuit of reform and modernization which is manifested in our tagline “Bagong Tiaong”, JICA plays a big role in reaching our destination. JICA ensures our clear sight to keep going in the right track. Jim Rohn once said that “If someone is going down the wrong road, he doesn’t need motivation to speed him up. What he needs is education to turn him around.” Education is the key to travel in the right direction.

In order to attain our goal, we should take one step at a time, starting first with aiming high-quality education. Living in a developing country, meeting the global standards of education is still a long trip away. Aside from effective teachers, which we apparently lack, students also need an environment which is conducive for learning. The number of classrooms cannot accommodate the growing number of youth who strive to secure their future.

Learning facilities and school equipment need to be upgraded for us to not lag behind. With insufficient funds from the government, private sectors who lend a hand play a big role in promoting development in the society.

In 1997, JICA donated a building of three classrooms to our school and in 2006, twenty-one computer sets. The assistance has incited the production of more competent graduates due to improvement in the quality of education.

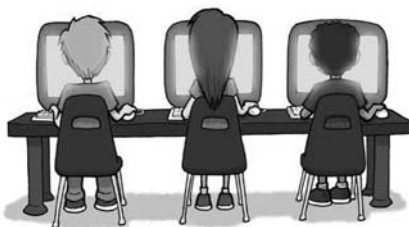
Better learning environment. Have you ever tried copying a lecture written on manila paper and posted on the blackboard with sunlight from the door and windows as the only source of illumination? Or answering an exam with your right hand while fanning nonstop with your other hand? How about memorizing sixty names in the shortest possible time? These are the usual scenes in a public school, but through JICA's steadfast effort, these were gradually altered.

Lower teacher-to-student ratio. Before the construction of the JICA building, the number of students per class in our school ranged from fifty-five to sixty-five. Our nation's scholars are packed like sardines in rooms that can't at least provide proper ventilation and sufficient lighting. Now, with the increase in the number of available classrooms and as part also of the K-12 program, every classroom is limited to only forty-five students at maximum.

Technological revolution. The installation of the computer sets started a revolution in the school. Information Technology (IT) subjects were taught and familiarized students with the technological advancements that run the world. We were equipped with knowledge on how to be part of the flattening world. Teachers began to use powerpoint presentations and we were given projects which require applications like Word, Photoshop, Movie Maker, and a lot more.

For seventeen years, the organization's projects fostered more than 3, 000 of the country's hopes, honing our future leaders, and adapting them to the 21st century. JICA's assistance opened doors of opportunity to the youth, especially to the less privileged majority. Only through us recipients does its legacy continue. We are very blessed to be given aid in attaining our goals. Through justification, initiation, conservation, and association (JICA), I, as a young member of the community, can not only give back but pay it forward.

Justification. I will disseminate information about the projects of JICA in our school to instill that it is a privileged that the agency chose to help us in our quest for progress.



Initiation. If ever I win in this essay competition, I will allot a portion of my prize money to the repainting of the building. If I really want to implement change, I should start with myself first, right?

Conservation. According to our school property custodian, the JICA building is the sturdiest among the buildings in our school and even after nearly two decades, it is still welcome to shelter more future leaders. Only few of the computer units remain functional and handling them with care would be the best way to pass them on to the next generation. With very limited finances, conservation would be wiser than renovation.

Association. The building walls are flawed and the some of the jalousies are missing. The restrooms are also not in use anymore because a lot of its features have been damaged. Every now and then, problems arise and through a strong cooperation with JICA, I can relay information about updates in our school. Tiaong aims economic growth and poverty alleviation. I know that our destination is still a long trip away, but with strong cooperation with JICA, our journey continues.

As we encounter sharp curves in the road even in times of heavy rainfall, JICA "wipes" all hindrances that fog our perspective. Our community may not be a car, but JICA clears our vision and helps us to speed up progress and drive in the right direction.

JICA-ODA IN THE YOUTH: FOSTERING PARTNERSHIP IN QUEST FOR DEVELOPMENT

Theresa Mae Villanueva, Fifth Place
South Hill School, Inc.



Among the many things I have heard, watched, read and learned about Japan, the gripping stories of the 2011 earthquake in Japan, the discipline, resilience and selflessness of the Japanese moved me to admiration.

Then, I was given this opportunity to know more about what this country have done to my community. My interest has grown more when I found out that JICA in 60 years through its vision of inclusive development has been my country's partner in improving the lives of Filipinos.

I looked further as to what projects they have conducted in Laguna and how these projects are helping my community. Then, I also wonder, will it be possible for me to contribute? If JICA is helping my country, as member of my community, then I must make a contribution as well.

My curiosity to search for more information through this activity enables JICA to achieve one of its objectives, to promote 60 years of Japan ODA in the Philippines, particularly among the youth like me. One of its missions is to help address global concerns particularly those that concerns the environment, health, peace and security.

The Philippines is seated in the "Pacific Ring of Fire" and it is also considered as the typhoon belt of the Western North Pacific basin. Because of this, my country is very much exposed to natural disasters. Another problem is terrorism that has been a threat to peace and security. And while this country needs a healthy population to be able to achieve its socio-economic development, the Philippines is also facing problems on health.

JICA, through its continuing country assistance strategies has been very supportive in helping us Filipinos address the problems.

Generally, JICA's projects are carried out through technical cooperation, developmental study for development planning, giving loans and aid. As of 2013, Mindanao has received huge assistance such as technical cooperation, development study for development planning and was granted loans. Luzon and Visayas on the other hand, were provided technical cooperation and also granted aids and loans.

JICA's projects create opportunity for participation and cooperation for young individuals and the school community. This should be of great interest to young generation who will benefit most from JICA's continuous effort. Foremost of these projects, is one that is of great interest to me – caring for the environment and this includes the Laguna lake ecosystem.

Laguna lake is considered the largest freshwater in the Philippines and in Asia. However, according to research findings, it is now the most degraded freshwater. One of JICA projects that were implemented in my community is focused on the lake's rehabilitation.

This is the “Integrated Coastal Ecosystem Conservation and Adaptive Management Under Local and Global Environmental Impacts”. JICA together with the University of the Philippines and other institutions leads a 5-year research project to help conserve biodiversity in the Philippines' coastal areas. Laguna Lake is one of the pilot areas.

How does this project help the people in Laguna?



It is a fact that natural and human beings have greatly affected the biodiversity of the Lake.

Aside from the declining condition of the Lake, the water quality is also declining resulting to decrease in open fish catch. JICA has given support to rehabilitate the Laguna Lake. Millions of Lagunense (people of Laguna) live along the shoreline.

Many families depend on the lake for a living and many of these families have children who need to be in school. In one of the journals I read about Laguna Lake, it is said that it is the “life and livelihood of small fishermen”. The rehabilitation of the lake will help improve biodiversity and the lake’s ecosystem. This in the end will provide the people more fish catch that can support their daily living.

Another ongoing project is “Enhancing Resiliency through Community Participatory Flood Observation for Lake Basin”. This project aims to protect the people living around the Laguna Lake.

According to JICA, this project will establish “an early warning system and craft long-term solutions to disasters like floods”. It is known that recently, millions of Lagunense were badly affected by typhoons and Habagat (monsoon rains) like what happened in 2009 typhoon Ondoy and the Habagat in 2012 and 2013, which brought flood that lasted for months in some areas.

This project of JICA will help people in our community become more prepared when calamities strike especially on where to relocate. On the part of the government, this would provide them an organized way of giving support and assistance. This would lessen injuries or worst death.

There have been calls to protect the Laguna Lake. Several years ago, hundreds of community-based youths and students from Laguna together with the local government units conducted a clean up activity wherein wastes from shorelines were collected and segregated.

While solid waste is identified as only part of a bigger problem affecting biodiversity of Laguna Lake, according to news, it is one of the major sources of the pollution of the lake. This is the project that young students can take active part, how to lessen solid waste especially in the household and in school.

It is a great thing that as young people of our generation, we have learned about JICA and that we can be PARTNER in our continuous quest for development. Young individual like me can contribute to JICA’s effort. First, by increasing awareness of JICA’s assistance to Filipino people.

Years ago, my first serious introduction to Japan’s history in the

Philippines is about how thousands people were killed, hundreds were wounded, and many were captured. Information about JICA as an organization, how they envision collaboration with different communities, how they continue to support Filipinos throughout the years changed my impression.

This actually made me look forward to someday cooperate with them in helping my country. Increasing awareness of young generation about JICA's assistance through their projects can further strengthen Japan-Philippines friendship.

One step at a time, there are many ways to contribute in JICA's project that our generation can participate and contribute. This could be in JICA's project that aims to rehabilitate the lake. Young generation like me should be informed about environmental issues. Students must be taught the value of caring for the environment.



Since solid waste is one of the major sources of pollution in the lake then our participation and contribution will be focused on reducing if not eliminate the volume of solid waste.

This will surely be worthwhile and will still be relevant to the next generation because in spite of the many programs on proper waste disposal, it remains a serious problem. According to research, people need to be educated about proper waste disposal and this should involve children and other household members.

Information campaign for proper waste management is one of the activities that can be held in the school. This activity can be participated by students, parents, and other participants. Our school can definitely spearhead. This way, we will be supporting JICA's project on rehabilitating the lake. It may be a small effort but taking the lead and setting a good example will encourage other communities to do the same.

The information campaign will include educating students about the importance of a clean surrounding and the proper way of disposing garbage. High school students like me can lead the campaign that will include pre-elementary pupils. Young as three years old should learn about it so that when they become old, the value of caring for the environment is already instilled in their mind. This will ensure that JICA's concern over the Laguna Lake is carried out until the next generation.

Lastly, my contribution could be in a form of recommendation to increase our generation's awareness of JICA. Several activities can be supported by JICA. One is a research project contest for high school that is focused on how people in the community can help in the conservation of our environment. Another is best school practice in waste management. In all those activities that JICA can possibly sponsored, my best contribution will be to participate and inspire young students to do the same.

If there is one that must take greater concern about our own environment, it is we who live in it. It is a good thing that other countries like Japan are unselfishly giving their support by sharing their knowledge and resources. It is high time we do our part. There is so much that JICA has given us and there are more. Surely, there are many ways we can do. It is for our country, it is for our fellow Filipinos. We, therefore must stand to cooperate and help.



EMPOWERING THE YOUTH THROUGH SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL COOPERATION

Apple Jean Dulig
Callang National High School



“Honor bespeaks worth. Confidence begets trust. Service brings satisfaction. Cooperation proves the quality of leadership.” I want to quote the following lines from the successful American businessman and entrepreneur, James Cash Penney, to serve as a platform in generating my essay.

Honestly speaking, at first, I know a little about the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA. It took me an exhaustive hour of literature review via the internet to gather information and eventually widen my understanding of the said agency. My initiative to learn more about the agency was truly worthwhile for it paved the way for me to become appreciative of the agency’s noble vision, significant mission and outstanding goals.

In general, JICA provides support to almost all aspects of endeavor, stressing the promotion of international cooperation by assisting economic and social growth among developing countries such as the Philippines.

Our school was also once a benefactor of one of the projects of JICA. As my uncle told me, during their high school years, when the school was still a community school situated at the heart of the fourth class municipality in the province, they used to attend their classes in buildings where windows were made of bamboos. Those buildings were actually the old town market before the new public market was erected at its present site.

They concreted the walls but they never changed their roofs. During rainy days, rain water dripped from the holes on the ceiling and

Not only that, as students left their classrooms, they were exposed to mud and rain water due to poor drainage system attributed to its location which was a former rice field. But these did not stopped teachers from inculcating pristine wisdom and noble virtues to the willing learners, and the students from enhancing their skills and embracing new concepts taught by dedicated mentors – an epitome of a genuine commitment.

This brought into my mind the lines which Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”

The erection of the JICA building in our school had literally paved the way for its transformation. The modern and beautiful building had been an instant attraction at the school premise because it stood out among the school buildings during that time. Every student had that eagerness to become part of the class occupying the said building. To the school, it was an additional venue for teaching-learning experiences. To teachers, it was a convenient place to practice their vocation. To students, it was an inspiration. To parents, it was a precious gift to their children. To the community, it was a worthy masterpiece.

The said building managed to withstand and survive the tests of nature – the fierceness of typhoons, the rocking earthquake tremors and the destructive effects posed by climate change and global warming, which can be compared to the pliancy of the students who were once sheltered and nurtured in the said building – being able to survive challenges and being able to manifest dexterity most of the time.

Despite the rapid burgeoning of buildings in our school, the monumental impact of the erection of the JICA building some years back remained a great inspiration to everyone. The metamorphosis it brought to the institution has catalyzed the attainment of vital changes and significant reforms in the succeeding years. In spite of the fact that some of its fixtures were damaged and missing, it remained an effective venue for learning.

At present, I am a ninth grader in this institution and in my three years in this school, there are innumerable activities I have done in the said building.



Most notable of which are the scientific activities we have conducted in the school laboratory which happen to be in one of the building's classrooms. Last year, it was in the Science laboratory where we conducted our investigatory project together with my two classmates which brought us to receive the award of being the second place in the Division Science Investigatory Project.

It was also last year when the class of Grade 8-A, our class, occupied one of its classrooms. These are but some of my many important experiences in the said building.

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Being a student who desires to give back the good things our school offers me, I took part in the Brigada Eskwela held last May before the opening of classes just like what I did the previous years. We cleaned the surroundings and helped in fixing the classrooms including the JICA building. And as the secretary of the Student Supreme Government, I, together with the other officers, am tasked of looking after the implementation of the school policies, rules and laws, including the anti-vandalism law.

I know how significant this school law is because vandalism renders the walls of the buildings and facilities unpleasant and dirty. It destroys the aesthetic impact of things.

The strict implementation of the said law restricts students from becoming vandals, otherwise they will be facing the consequences of their unpleasant act – cleaning and performing other penalties. I am confident and positive that the JICA building, a truly important legacy from Japan, will continue to serve its purpose. I know that more learners may benefit from it.

The classrooms may be old as compared to the newly-constructed ones, but it remains as a significant landmark of our school. It is not just a simple and ordinary building. It is a solid foundation, an edifice fortified with knowledge and wisdom. And I am positive that through it, more pristine knowledge will be imparted, more outstanding virtues will be imbibed, more dreams will be realized, and more young generations will be empowered.

Truly, Japan International Cooperation Agency is worthy of honor and praise for its unceasing and unparalleled support to developing countries. Its confidence in bringing cooperation among nations is indeed exceptional. Its services are genuinely offered and shared. More importantly, winning the cooperation of countries to embrace its mission, vision and goals is indicative of its honest, dedicated and dynamic leadership.

MORE THAN ANIME

Elaine F. Espirin
Holy Family School of Quezon City, Inc.



What comes to mind whenever you hear the word Japan?

If you ever find yourself wandering the streets of Quezon City, try asking youngpeople that question. I believe that more likely each young person will answer with one word: Anime. Trust me, I know because I was also asked the same question and promptly gave the same answer.

In the Philippines, that is how most of young people see Japan. It is all right tolove Japan for the quirky, colorful art it has gifted the world.

However, if your only image of Japan is a katana-wielding girl in a school uniform, your knowledge of Japan needs a serious update. I tell you: Japan is way more than that. The rest of the world should know this, especially us Filipinos.

Japan and the Philippines have established the bonds of friendship and cooperation through the years by constant interaction and open communication. Since 1966, Japan through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has implemented several activities in the Philippines.

The projects involve combining the man-power and resources of Japan and the Philippines to resolve specific problems such as water pollution, rice farming, fish breeding, maternal and child health, accommodation of handicapped people in rural areas and, of course, education. In the National Capital Region (NCR) where my city is, JICA has two technical projects: the Project for Supporting Senior High School Modeling in Selected Technical Vocational High Schools (SHS Modeling) and the Capacity Development Project on Water Quality Management.

If you have a faucet near you, get a cup and fill it to the brim. Ever wonder how much bacteria live in that cup you are holding right now? Although the water has been processed before being piped out to different parts of the cities, microbes still lurk in the water, the very water we use for bathing, cooking and drinking. Since the boom of industrial businesses, water pollution has been a problem.

Chemical and human wastes now float the murky rivers of Marikina and Pasig. Here is where JICA plays a role. Its project, the Capacity Development Project on Water Quality Management, is mainly focused on improving our sources of water. As a saying goes, "If you want to change the outcome, change the cause first."



JICA has conducted researches and studies to investigate possible measures to improve the conditions and extend the lives of our bodies of water. When the project ended on 2011, the water pollution has been tracked thoroughly for us locals who rely on the common water origins in the NCR. My fears of having explosive diarrhea due to contaminated water have greatly diminished, thanks to this brilliant monitoring procedure.

The Philippines has recently shifted from the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) to the K-12 curriculum as the country has been lagging behind the world on the required education of its high school graduates. The country has recognized the needs of the younger generation to cope with a dynamic society and changing needs of a global workforce. The Senior High in a K-12 curriculum, according to my homeroom teacher, allows more hands-on activities and general education subjects related to most university-level coursework. It aims to prepare graduating students for life after high school.

With this, the Department of Education (DepEd), in cooperation with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and JICA, launched the Senior High School Modeling Program (SHS Modeling Program). The goal of the SHS Modeling Program is to train Filipino high school students, specifically students of grade levels 11 and 12, in vocational courses. Poverty is very evident in the Philippines, and only a number of families can afford to send their children to college. If a student decides not to pursue college education, a vocational course will be helpful to them.

JICA recognizes this possibility and offers its assistance to guarantee the success of the said program. When funds have been established, schools were needed to house the activities. Currently, three schools are used as facilities: the Rizal Experimental Station and Pilot School for Cottage Industries, located in Pasig City, Metro Manila; the Don Alejandro Roces Sr. Science and Technology High School, which is in Quezon City, Metro Manila; and, San Pedro Relocation Center National High School.

Hundreds of students took the opportunity and on March 2014, the first class of the SHS Modeling Program graduated.

In an interview with some of the students, an SHS graduate said, "It was a nice opportunity for me to study at the Tech-Voc track during my grade 11 and 12, because I could obtain the National Certificates and experienced OJT."

Important as it seems, most of our youth don't actually know of this. This is a real problem. These projects are aimed for the betterment of the future generation's life. If you want to make it big, you need to start small. I started a few days ago, by sharing of this to my very own circle of friends. They were astonished at this fact. Soon, the news of this article spread throughout my class.

If my motives were to be followed, I will make a group of students. Our very goal is for us to educate the younger batches, especially those in the grade 10 as of 2014, of the SHS Modeling Program and the Capacity Development Project on Water Quality Management, since we are the last batch of the BEC Curriculum and the only ones who are blessed to have known such information.

We will share with them the possible line of works they could go into, or the home-based works they could initiate using the SHS Modeling Program, and the ways they could help the Philippines in conserving our water sources with the help of the Capacity Development Project on Water Quality Management program. That will be our first move. The next is to let them experience the activities firsthand.

That way, they will be able to validate the information our student group has given to them, and of course, have the idea of what they will be doing for two years, or for the years to come if ever they decide to pursue and/or join the projects.

Because of the Capacity Development Project on Water Quality Management and the SHS Modeling Program, lives were saved and changed. These programs reiterate the friendship and cooperation of Japan and the Philippines.



Upon learning the extent of assistance Japan lends to the Philippines, my impression of Japan changed from the land of Anime to a mighty country whose generosity knows no bounds. Japan showed its patience for our sake. How do we ensure that the benefits of these projects are perpetuated? Simple: we take care of our water and education resources, encourage the future generation to pursue what friendship and cooperation with Japan through JICA taught us, and share the knowledge to other regions and countries. With those, the combined efforts will never go to waste.

On a personal level...

Here is the question again: What comes to mind when you hear the word Japan?

STANDING STRONG AND TALL

Millen Sidney Paderes
Recto Memorial National High School



Classes are finally over. Stressed and tired, I pack my things in my bag. I felt happy as I hung my bag over my back. Whilst walking in the pathway, an upperclassman of mine bumped into me. With that, I slammed my head against an old, rusty post. I looked around after I hurt myself and saw that I was in front of the school's most expensive building.

This building I stopped at dates back to 1997. It was done even before the tragic fire incident of our school. It even outdates the horrid typhoon that destroyed the trees and other buildings. Yes, this has to be the JICA building.

I stared at the façade that was staring back at me. That same building was standing strong ever since I entered high school. I knew that was the JICA building in an instant because my mom used to do her classes there.

Seventeen years ago, JICA gifted our school a 3-room building and 20 computers. That event became the turning point for our school's way of educating through modernization. Our school has been truly grateful ever since.

But when I asked my teacher, he told me that after the construction was done, students nor teachers were not allowed to have classes in the JICA building. Even seminars weren't allowed to be conducted even in just one room of that building. Why? Simply because the building cost millions of pesos. This was due to the shock and quake-proof structure of the building. The architects who designed it must really be wise to even dig a hole six feet under it to prevent the cracking of walls in case of an earthquake.

Sturdy, I thought.

But years later, people became finally accessible to that school building, as for the computers, too. Students now have a second home to take care of. Classes, seminars, as well as Homeroom PTA meetings are much easier to conduct now. And I must say, the shock and quake-proof feature of the JICA building really helps in facing calamities. Even I take shelter there when sudden earthquakes occur.

Up until now, the JICA classrooms are standing strong and tall. It has helped many students have another home. Fascinating thoughts about it flooded my mind. It may look rusty and dusty, but 3 sections may not have the chance of having comfortable classes if it wasn't built.



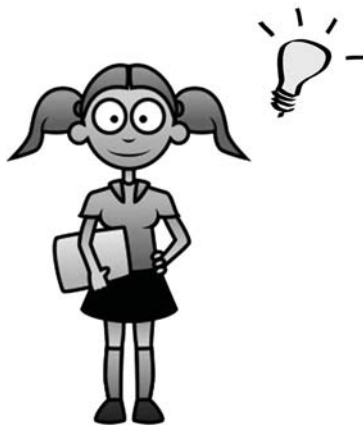
If it weren't for those rooms, I, myself, wouldn't be able to pass my Science class last year. I wouldn't have the chance to participate in the English Quiz Bee. I wouldn't be able to act as a character for a group play. All these little yet important chances would be gone from the palm of my hands if it weren't for the JICA building.

As for the donated computers, they really help out in making students' work much easier. Not only do those computers help students, teachers too. Computing grades and submitting requirements has been a breeze since they can do it inside the school now.

I may have mentioned the words old, rusty, and dusty many times here but that's just because those are the first things I noticed about the building. I just thought that it would be a shame if that building crushed into dust just because it wasn't taken care of by the students who reside their classes there. A little facelift and clean-up may just help it keep its place for lots more generations to come.

As for my own way of maintaining it, a campaign would be a good idea. Reminding the students who use that building just how significant and important it is to the history of our school would motivate them to take care of it more. With a little renovation, it would look good as new. Ten years from now, I hope I'd still get to see this building even after I have graduated. I'd want to see it the way I used to back when I was studying.

Just by gazing at that building, I have made up a whole story in my head. It just proves that the JICA building contributes a lot to our school's facilities, significance, and history.



JICA: 60 YEARS OF ASSISTANCE BEYOND BORDERS

Claire Banganan
Rizal National School of Arts and Trade



Throughout the years, the Philippines has gone through a lot of challenges, may it be natural disasters that devastated different parts of the country or crises in different aspects. Our country has surpassed all of these and will continue to rise again no matter what. This alone is considered a commendable achievement and honor for us, Filipinos, but the credit is not ours alone. We made it because we have friends who are more than willing to offer assistance in times of need. We made it because we are not on our own. We made it because we have you...

For over a quarter of a century, JICA has been our active partner in the pursuit of sustainable development in our country. In fact, the Philippines is one of the largest recipients of the technical cooperation provided by the Government of Japan through JICA.

Japan International Cooperation Agency or commonly known by the acronym JICA, is an independent organization that helps to develop and provide cooperation in economic growth, poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, other development issues such as health and governance, and in promoting peace and development in conflict-affected Mindanao. With these focus points, JICA aims to promote inclusive and dynamic development to secure a better future for Filipinos.

Statistics shows that the Philippines posted a 6.6% economic growth in 2012 and in 2013, gained investment-grade ratings from two credit rating agencies. Amidst the economic growth, however, many problems remain. Unemployment rate stands at 7.1% and the 27.9% poverty incidence remained practically the same between 2006 and 2012. Fortunately, JICA remains to be of great assistance.

In our place, one of the evident concerns in education is the lack of classrooms for most schools. As an answered prayer, JICA's helping hands have already reached our community.

Here in our town, JICA has already contributed a big help in our education. For how many years now, we have been enjoying the comfort of a four-classroom building with well-built comfort rooms.

The said rooms accommodate all the cream sections in our school from grade 7 to grade 10 with more or less 140 students. Another cream-colored building with a different structure and is separated from the other classrooms is located at a nearby elementary school. This is occupied and used by the Grade 5 pupils. The last one is located at our town's elementary central school.

These projects are not just mere buildings. These are materialized help for our community. They give us, students, comfort in our study during the day. It also allows us to think more clearly and concentrate on what we are doing owing to the fact that we are under a secured school building. With enough space, we can become more aggressive, competitive and active in the activities inside the classroom and as such, we can have all the fun time with our friends and classmates as well as with our teachers as we learn and explore more.

Yes, we have received help and we are very much grateful for it. However, a great challenge and responsibility comes with this gratitude-- that is to maximize the years that these buildings are used to aid education and that its benefits will not end with us nor with the next batch but will extend with more and more batches to come.

As a young citizen and student of our school, I know that I should take part in this great challenge. In order to maintain the JICA's projects, proper discipline is one of the topmost requirements. I have to model taking responsibility of our JICA-given classroom in the best way I can. I have to become a steward of our classrooms by stopping vandalism and promoting cleanliness and orderliness in order to prolong the life of the building.

JICA is a really good organization that epitomizes a Good Samaritan. Without JICA, we, Filipinos, most possibly still have a very poor economic growth.

Working together with them is such a great advantage. We really thank them for establishing this kind of organization. For the time being, we are in need their help and we pray that the time will come that all their contributions to us will be paid back.

For the meantime, we should maintain JICA's projects as strong as they are today for the other generations to use and benefit from it. We owe it to the kind-hearted JICA family to keep their legacy in the best way we could.

As a footnote, being a beneficiary of JICA projects in our place, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to JICA. May JICA thrive more in abundance as much as you give for more years to come. May your blessings be a hundred fold back for your 60 years and counting assistance that have gone beyond race, cultures and any borders. Long live Japan-Philippines friendship! Viva, JICA!

JICA SUPPORTS HEALTH PROJECTS FOR CORDILLERANS

Khaleila Daine Luyaben
Tabuk City National High School



Japan International Cooperation Agency also known as JICA is an international independent government agency. JICA's mission statement reads: "We, as a bridge between the people of Japan and developing countries, will advance international cooperation through the sharing of knowledge and experience and will work to build a more peaceful and prosperous world."

Just reading it gives us the idea of this agency. One of their main objectives is to help and assist developing countries in terms of uplifting their economic and social conditions to strengthen Japan's ties with these countries, which includes the Philippines.



The inclusion of the Philippines in the JICA's programs to alleviate the existing conditions in impoverished communities, especially in the far-flung areas, is truly a privilege worth praising. In the Cordilleras alone, a lot of health providers are benefitting much and are now better-equipped to reach out to my fellow Cordillerans to promote health services even to remote areas. The organization also helps fund the coffee industry in the region which is the main source of local produce in many provinces in the region.

Before, the Cordillerans have given birth at home where they have these "traditional native midwives" who may or may not be available given the distances between villages. It so happens not all villages have a native midwife. There are others who deliver with the help of their relatives who make themselves available when someone is about to give birth. They call this method as "hilot".

Some also give birth by themselves, with their husband out in the fields. At the ancestral native villages, some women are designated to serve the community by helping others in giving birth. In terms of curing the sick, they have their own traditions and beliefs that pass off for medication. For a long-drawn-out illness, a medium is called to assess the liver of the sacrificial animal. The following night, the men will assemble, dancing the salisid and play the tungatong, for the conciliation of the spirits. Before the healing rite or "dawak", the house is ornamented with ferns in its four corners.

Animals are butchered for sacrifice. If the healing is not successful, a herbalist, nabdadagop, is called with his preparation of plants that are administered to the patient. Many of the native Kalinga villagers have lived with these customs and practices for so long that it was hard for them to adapt with the new ways.

Steeped in their native traditions as they are, they might have been reluctant to seek for medical attention from trained health professionals. Not only this, but they are also going through a chronic financial crisis, so they would rather keep to their old ways. As a consequence, maternal morbidity and mortality is at a very high rate.

When JICA's project Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health and Nutrition project was implemented, the health status of the Cordillerans have improved. Almost all accept medical assistance. They are now aware of the services offered in their community. The "traditional midwives" are now sued if they help in delivering birth without professional assistance.

With JICA's help, maternal mortality and morbidity rate has been significantly lessened because of the MNCHN strategy. This has a very big impact to communities aside from the assurance of safer delivery of babies. They say that education begins at home. Mothers are the first teachers to their own children. Without the assistance of mothers to their kids, it will be hard for them to learn at school.

They also will have a hard time adapting with the community. To a child, family and home gives them the feeling of belongingness and comfort. Without the mother, a child cannot feel the warmth of home. Thus, if we truly desire a strong community people with strong, capable and responsible citizens, we need to take better care of our mothers. Truly, each mother is a vital human resource.

The agency also helps fund the coffee industry in the region. The coffee industry is one of the main sources of local livelihood in almost all of the provinces in the region. Trainings, seminars, technical know-how, and others have been introduced to be able to help increase production and sales of ground coffee. The objective of meeting the forty-percent increase is a big step in reaching the market globally.

This will benefit the people because, nowadays, people especially here at the region make coffee as their preferred morning beverage.

This also helps the locals improve their living conditions and helps them to become independent in creating valuable ways to help the community and themselves, too. What a great opportunity for us, Cordillerans, to have this privilege!

Coffee can also improve energy levels and can make us smarter. Coffee contains caffeine that blocks an inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain which leads to a stimulant effect that improves the energy and function of the brain. It also has essential nutrients: a single cup of coffee already has eleven percent Riboflavin, six percent Vitamin B5, three percent Manganese and Potassium, and two percent Magnesium and Niacin. Without the coffee development project, people will have to buy coffee that is more expensive and less nutritious than the coffee produced within the region.

As a young citizen and a student, I can engage in promoting awareness and appreciation of existing Japan International Cooperation Agency's projects in our region by providing information about health-related topics. I also should be aware of what they're advocating. Also I can be into voluntary services. I will immerse myself to what I've come up on these projects, live with it in order to practice it and for the future generation to see what it advocates. Information dissemination is also important to reach other people and let them know how important it is. Involvement is the key.



THE TRAFFIC MOVING FORWARD

Gabriel Antonio Juan
Ateneo de Manila High School



Newspapers headlines these past weeks have always had something to do with the PDAF scam. Billions of pesos were lost. Come to think of it, however, the money that was embezzled in this PDAF scam is nothing compared to the amount of money wasted due to the exceedingly heavy traffic in Metro Manila.

Based on a study conducted by JICA, because of this Metro Manila traffic, there is an annual loss of 140 Billion Pesos. The amount is staggering, but it seems nothing is being done. Filipinos tend to focus more on problems that do not match this gridlock's ramifications.

The study about the traffic problem in Metro Manila and what can be done about it, which was made possible because of the assistance from JICA, in my opinion, opens the eyes of Filipinos, not only those in the government, but also of ordinary people like me. With this study, with the knowledge of the consequences of the congestion we ourselves cause, we can cooperate and voice our support to the implementation of the proposed infrastructure roadmap. Because of this study, we are not left to stand idly in ignorance.

After seeing on Youtube video presentation on the Infrastructure Roadmap for Mega Manila, I gained more understanding of the problem. With the solutions proposed, I was filled with hope.

I myself am a victim to this traffic jam. Every weekday, I travel to school, and what on weekends is a 15-minute drive, extends to an hour and thirty-minute ride. Not only does this cause unwanted morning stress, it serves as an impediment to learning. This traffic too contributes to the already existing air pollution, which has a negative effect to every inhabitant in this country. The JICA study's proposal and plans, once executed, will be of great impact to public in putting an end to the negative effects of this congestion.



I have been to Singapore and Hong Kong and what I can admire from my visits to these countries is how well their planning was and how their traffic rules and laws are implemented. Singapore and Hong Kong's traffic systems maximize the spaces and roads they have, and because of this, traffic flows smoothly. With their many expressway, flyovers, public transportation, travelling is organized and systematic. Development is not centered on one city but is dispersed all over, and access to these places is not at all a problem. The proposed roadmap, I believe, will recreate these Singaporean and Hong Kong systems in the Philippines. This is definitely something to look forward to.

Although the plan is mainly created for Metro Manila, its impact will be immense all throughout the Philippines. The transport cost in Metro Manila right now according to the study is 2.4 Billion Peso per day. When this grand plan is executed, the cost will be reduced and billions will be saved. With these savings, resources become available that can be used to help economic growth, develop rural areas, and ultimately propel the Philippines to becoming a 1st world country.

For this dream to be realized, it is necessary that we all cooperate and support its implementation. This will encourage our leaders to act. We, the youth, can do our share and express also our support. We are known for our involvement in the social media. I too am a regular user of this social media. With a click of a button, the video presentation can be done about it. With more support, our leaders will be compelled to act. Should they fail to heed our call, we, the leaders of tomorrow, will be the ones to solve the problem. And thanks to JICA, we already have the roadmap.

THE COURSE TO ITS DIAMOND SUMMERS

Mikhail Ed3ck Dy
South Hill School, Incorporated



The Philippines, a developing country known for its resiliency, a beloved country of various Filipino ethnicities- very often beset with tragic calamities and events. When the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA came to help our country with their open hearts and helping hands, a bond was formed and has lasted through decades. They offered agricultural, educational, environmental, industrial, and social, welfare services and assistance for our country's needs. Projects such as: "University of the Philippines Information Technology Development Center (UP ITDC) – a joint program for the University of the Philippines and the Japan International Cooperation Agency", "Enhancing Resiliency through Community Participatory Flood Observation for the Laguna Lake Basin", "The Study on Comprehensive Flood Mitigation for Cavite Lowland Area in the Republic of the Philippines", "Cavite Laguna Expressway Project (Laguna Section)", "Agrarian Reform Infrastructure Support Project (ARISP)", "JICA Support to the Technical Cooperation Project (TCP3) Lagare Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc.". The said projects are only some in the limelight of JICA's noteworthy proceedings. In line with these are the favourable effects of the projects in my community and region, but in what way do they serve my fellowmen?

Information technology, flood monitoring system, disaster management, enhancing transportation efficiency, enhancing agricultural production, and farmer empowerment- these provide my fellowmen with the precise necessities that are desired in this time of hardship. What do we need UP ITDC for? In a rapidly changing world, this center provides training services so its graduates can fill the needs of the growing IT industry. The graduates are like fast information processors in various businesses and enterprises. How about the disasters that have been threatening the CALABARZON area? Does JICA have solutions for them?

Yes, through the projects “Enhancing Resiliency through Community Participatory Flood Observation for Laguna Lake Basin”, and “The Study on Comprehensive Flood Mitigation for Cavite Lowland Area in the Republic of the Philippines”. These projects study and prevent flooding which is one of the main catastrophes in the Philippines. The people in Laguna and Cavite will be able to swim their way out to the surface and breathe with relief with the outcomes of these projects. Are you experiencing an extensive, exhausting drive to and from Kawit, Cavite and Mamplasan, Laguna? Worry no more. JICA has been of assistance in developing an expressway that will consider environmental sustainability through the venture of the “Cavite Laguna Expressway Project (Laguna Section)”. This will increase transportation efficiency for the delivery of various goods to and from this southern section, helping our country become ever more deserving of the title “A Tiger Economy”.

Moreover, we also need agricultural empowerment. JICA has the “Agrarian Reform Infrastructure Support Project (ARISP)” and the “Support to the Technical Cooperation Project (TCP3) Lagare Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc.” These are steps in becoming agriculturally stable, with the trainings and demonstrations regarding rice production conducted to farmers in Quezon and Rizal. Let us bear in our minds that farmer empowerment is important in agricultural sustainability. Becoming more knowledgeable in one’s craft makes one appreciate it more and he becomes even more efficient when doing it. Farmer empowerment will surely contribute to the country’s food security in the years to come.



I have been discussing about the contributions of JICA to CALABARZON, but as a young citizen of my country, how can I show my gratitude and do my part in making these projects worthwhile today and to the generations to come? Little steps may go a long way. I can be a part of a new economy by spreading the news about these projects through the far-reaching tentacles of the social media.

This is a very notable action for we all know that social media is an effective medium in informing people of what is currently happening around us. What else can I contribute? Considering the aspect of agriculture, the most concrete thing that I can do is to eat only what is needed by my body so less food, particularly rice, will go to waste. We should always value the labor that our farmers give in planting food crops. In some of my spare time, hopefully I will be able to do research regarding what help is needed more in my community and region like, a more stable electricity production through the use of renewable resources particularly geothermal power plants in Los Banos and for my region, food economics because many people suffer from starvation and poverty in the CALABARZON area. As a youth, I can learn more about disaster risk preparedness and practice energy conservation measures in the years that may come. When I become a professional, I can possibly be a participant in conducting the farmer empowerment trainings and also be a contributor of the future JICA development projects here in my beloved country. I can be an instrument of change in my motherland even through little ways as a student, as a member of a household, and as a member of my community.

As JICA celebrates its diamond year, may the bond between our countries remain unbreakable. Just like a diamond, may JICA's brilliance continue to illuminate us during our country's troubling times and inspire the Filipino to create more meaningful projects of their own as well.

JICA, AN AGENT FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Jethro Ephraim Uera
Tabuk City National High School



Kalinga Province is in the Northern part of the Philippines. Known for its rich cultural heritage and natural resources, it is home to different indigenous people, many of whom still practice their native customs and traditions. It is generally mountainous for it is where the Cordillera mountain range and the Caraballo mountain range cross and meet.



It has seven municipalities and one city. Most of these municipalities are located in the mountains and lack irrigation systems. Due to this, their rice production is very small compared to that of the City of Tabuk, the capital of the province. The citizens of these municipalities also have a hard time bringing their products to the market due to lack of roads leading to the center.

During the times of hardship for the Kalingas, the times when they can't help but endure the pains and privations brought by insufficient food supply and lack of resources, JICA was one of the organizations that helped the province. JICA extend its hands to help address these problems. JICA served as an agent of change and development not only in the province but also in the Cordillera region and other parts of the country.

Pangol, a barangay of the municipality of Tanudan, which is one of the poorest municipalities of the Philippines, had been a recipient of an irrigation dam which could irrigate 60 hectares. The people of Tanudan grow crops but they lack irrigation systems in order to maximize the productivity of their lands. With the construction of the dam, Pangol could supply enough rice for Tanudan instead of having to depend on Tabuk City for their rice supply.

Rizal is a municipality of Kalinga which is not endowed with abundant water resources compared to other municipalities of Kalinga.

Rizal, too, is not as mountainous as the other municipalities. As a matter of fact, it is considered a dry municipality. Its agricultural lands are rain-fed and farm owners use water pumps for them to be able to till their land twice a year. The farmers produce a good yield but much of what should have been their profit goes to offset expenses for the gasoline used for the water pumps. As if to compound the already awful conditions farm owners have to deal with, Rizal is a fourth-class municipality that could hardly construct farm-to-market roads.

Imagine farmlands not having constant and enough irrigation service to sustain the crops. Imagine yourself getting tired and having problems watering your land but still ending up with a small produce. Imagine yourself walking on a rough road that gets hot and dusty during the dry season and very muddy during rainy seasons, a road that you cannot even consider as a road at all. Imagine yourself driving on a one-way road, your vehicle having trouble navigating through a rolling road filled with potholes or mud pools just to get your harvest. As a person who grew up traversing a road like that, I feel their pain. Imagine yourself in their position just to bring your small produce to the market. It is not really that hard to understand those who had given up after getting tired of working so hard but getting a minimal harvest and, consequently, a meagre income from what they have worked for.

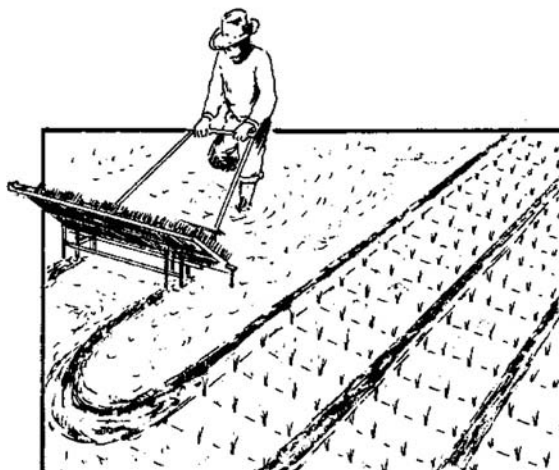
Somehow, JICA found its way to help Rizal. Completed this year is an eight-kilometre road that links the western barangays of Rizal to its eastern barangays. This road also connects Rizal to Pinukpuk then to Tabuk City. This project will surely have a huge impact on the easier transport of agricultural products of the people of Rizal to the market.

The Katagoan Water System that will soon benefit barangays Liwan West and Calaocan in Rizal is still under construction. This is a part of JICA's projects in Rizal. Units of water pump are also set for distribution to barangays of the municipality. I believe that these projects will greatly benefit the people of Rizal in their production of rice and other crops.

With these projects, I can now imagine the burden of the Kalingas becoming lighter. I can feel their relief as, instead of walking on rough and muddy roads, vehicles can now easily come and go from their place to transport their goods to the market. I can feel their relief of not having to worry about irrigation to sustain their crops until harvest time.

Because of JICA, projects were funded. Because of these projects, farms were tilled, roads were built, farming became easier, production of rice increased and farmers had more income compared to what they were having before. Overall, I can say that JICA really helped in building the lives of farmers and the community as well.

I know these are not the only projects of JICA in our province. Next time, when I go to those places again, I already know which roads I'm walking on and how it came to be. I can't help but to appreciate and treasure it. By treasuring it I can help in maintaining the relevance of the project for others to appreciate it. By treasuring things, I will be more concerned about it and will help in maintaining its good condition for the next generation to experience and benefit from these projects.



As a student in high school, I already have dreams and plans for the future; one of which is to go to college, finish a degree and then get a job. Someday, when I get there, when I will be in a position to, I shall look back and help in maintaining the good state of the projects and maybe even expand it so that more will be benefitted and others will begin to really appreciate these things for what they bring to the people in terms of opportunities for advancement.

Kalinga is a mountainous place. Farmers have difficulty in bringing their products to the market. Farmers have problems with irrigation. But now their burden became lighter. Kalinga was once part of the Club 20, a fancy tag for the twenty poorest provinces in the country. But that is not so anymore. Still, we will always look back to the ones who helped in seeing us through those dark and difficult times. And JICA is one of them. Truly, JICA was, is, and will always be an agent for change and development.

SIXTY-YEAR LEGACY: PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT

John Resty B. Almario
Recto Memorial National High School



Sixty years of addressing the global agenda. Sixty years of reducing poverty through equitable growth. Sixty years of improving governance. Sixty years of achieving human security. It was six decades since then when Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) established and started its valuable public services and assistance. Started with a simple agency, JICA is now a renowned organization in the whole world that constantly advocates their vision – Inclusive and Dynamic Development - which aims for countries' progression.

Their vision promotes creation of self-reinforcing virtuous cycles of mid-to long-term economic growth and poverty reduction in a constantly changing environment of developing countries.

This economic growth and poverty reduction can be certainly obtained through only one solution – education. If all people were well-educated, everyone will have their place in the community, everyone will have enough capability to work in a fine and decent job, everyone will not experience poverty.

But now, even if education is given, its excellence or class is not provided uniformly to different schools. Some school can offer satisfactory learning but most of the school in our country cannot. However, the main issue is that the quality of education in our country gradually shrinks because of the inflating poverty. Lacking of facilities, classrooms, classroom materials and school equipment is a significant factor affecting education quality.

To address this kind of problem, JICA took its one big step in upholding its advocacy, beginning with their close by neighboring countries until they reached my country.

Seeing sponsored school building in my own school, it is now evident that JICA also reached my school, my community. Seventeen years ago, this new hope of my present school started to rise. This JICA building, as it was called, already sheltered more than 2, 500 students on its 3 classrooms.



This building also has two restrooms but currently not working and one small extra room for storage of school's equipment. Up to these days, JICA building's classrooms was still in use and always ready for the future's students that will use this building.

This building appeared to be a huge blessing for my school because of the rising population of students. As the population increases, additional classrooms are needed too.

It is also overwhelming hearing that this building is not the only benefit my school got. This latest technology is also a very big help for it is rare to see in public high schools (in that time) and only few schools can avail buying this equipment. These 21 sets of computer were installed and shared by students for about eight years and still functioning until now.

Installation of this equipment lightened the teachers' demanding way of expounding their lessons especially the Information Technology (IT) subject.

Instead of just discussing lessons and memorizing terms, they can now demonstrate the topic which is clearly seen by the students. Moreover, students can also use these computers by themselves and through this; they can further explore and discover things.

I stand as a living proof of this project. In my first two years in high school, I was one of approximately 400 students per year who were given an opportunity to use these computers. I was given a chance, as a first timer in handling computer, to learn how it is manipulated. It also boosted my confidence as a student from being one who doesn't know how to use computer. Using computer - this was just a simple but affected my all.

As one of the beneficiaries of JICA's project, I am aware also of being one of the people who should value these goods. Recipients must be conscious that they have also responsibilities on the things donated as a recipient.

Two ways. Two simple ways to cherish those gifts – preserve and reserve. Preserve those gifts as good as it was first given. By simply maintaining its good condition is more than enough. Always use it with care; have initiative.

Through this, we can save money. Instead of spending for renovation, just take care of the establishment or equipment to prevent spending and let its significance extend beyond.

To preserve things is to reserve the next generation. It's like sharing by letting others to experience things that you experienced.

Construction of buildings. Installing different equipment. Implementing road projects. Providing public health programs. Lending special loans. Every projects and implementations of JICA is now everywhere, local and international.

For almost 60 years of its existence, it changed and improved many institutions in many countries. Providing needs for people and helping without hesitation, JICA's services are such precious thing that certainly should be treasured.

Most importantly, their aspiration to deflate poverty cases and obtain economic growth is what the countries need. To attain these changes, JICA took its big step concerning quality education. JICA's implementation imparting school's premises and apparatuses can intensify education quality which initiates to their mission and vision – promoting quality education which leads to economic growth and poverty reduction.

JICA: THE ROAD TO LONG-STANDING FRIENDSHIP

Shelley Sundae P. Naparota
Cavite National Science High School



For sixty years, Japan has helped the Philippines in ways not quite noticeable to my fellow Filipino people. The truth is that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has continuously given service and assistance to my country in different fields such as technical cooperation projects which includes livelihood improvement, poverty reduction, peace stability, tourism and environmental protection, training and support programs and a lot more. We, Filipinos may not just be aware of it but Japan has contributed a lot to the development of the country, providing it with grants and loans, recognizing its self-help effort towards progress and development.

In the past six years, statistics says that Japan has continued to be the top donor of both official development assistance (ODA) and loans to the country, supporting and assisting the country towards its economic development.

In our province, one of the JICA projects most citizens probably aren't even aware of was the development of the Cavite Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) located at Rosario and General Trias.

During the early years of its construction, CEPZ only had few factories in it and most of its phases had not been prepared yet. It wasn't that ready for companies despite the high demand it would face since it is favorably located near Metro Manila. With this, the project was designed to improve the condition of the said zone so as to accommodate both domestic and foreign investors. After all, these investors provide the companies their capital for businesses which, in return, positively affect the economic growth and improve the livelihood of the province.

Upon the implementation of the project, the number of companies, according to JICA, has significantly increased from 1992 up to now. Because of this, the imports, exports and the demands for the products of CEPZ positively increased. Also, its operation has provided the people with greater employment opportunities. But with Cavite as a developing province, its rapidly growing population may not always provide the people with enough jobs in CEPZ.



Another project JICA contributed was the JICA Building in my school. In that building physically stands our learning resource center, research laboratory, mini museum and the teacher's library. They are where we learn, where we acquire knowledge and apply skills. Through the resources there, I am able to conduct an ongoing research study "The Efficiency of Acacia (*Samanea saman*), Bangka-bankaan (*Rhoeo spathacea*) and Mayana (*Coleus atropurpureus*) Leaf Extracts as Sensitizers for Dye-sensitized Solar Cells".

My research study is about determining an organic sensitizer that will make an effective substitute for the high-cost sensitizer found in solar panels which convert sun's energy into electrical energy.



This would be of great help since electric sources, nowadays, are one of the biggest problems in our country. The electricity that everyone is using at home and in other places are mostly from crude oil, and according to Matthias (2013), 3.997 million tons of crude oil had been consumed in the last five years. The world is, already in fact, facing global crisis. Sooner or later, our energy sources will run out. It is, therefore, time for us to start utilizing another long-time sustaining source to cope with the energy problem.

This just shows that JICA somehow indirectly helps the world's problems just by simply providing our school with that JICA building. It made me realize once more that great improvements really do come from small steps.

Also, in the eyes of a normal citizen, this building won't probably matter a lot nor will it be regarded as of great importance with regard to the development of the nation. But to us students, teachers, staff and alumni of the institution, that building means so much more. In that building figuratively stands our hopes. It is a stepping stone to our dreams, the foundation to our ambitions. It was constructed with aspirations and desires for a better tomorrow. On its walls, we engraved so many ideas and thoughts; painted it with hopes and optimism for the future.

That JICA Building, as well, has served partly as the second home of the students who have gone and passed by and those students who currently are there.

We, students, devoted a part of our stay there, acquired knowledge and applied learning in the process. It is a visual representation of the students' hope, the teachers' passion and the school's determination itself towards the pursuit of greater progress. It is another way of saying that some people out there care for the future of these students, a silent way of saying that some people do care for the future, at all.

As a student and as a young citizen, one thing I can do is just simply maintain the cleanliness of the area and the building itself for it is a way of showing that I respect and appreciate the importance of their help and contribution. But, probably, the best that I can do is to share to the people I know the knowledge about Japan's ODA and JICA. Simply the knowledge that some countries are thoughtful enough to help and assist us, not just for the economic development of the country but also for the convenience of the people's lives, is simply heart-warming and flattering.

That knowledge shared to other people is, I believe, already enough to make the projects worthwhile and relevant not just in the near future but for as long as that mere building stands there. Sometimes, it's not just about the material things that the projects had provided us. Sometimes, it can be just because of the fact that someone cared, that someone cares, and that someone will care.

All in all, JICA is a way of sustaining the long-standing friendship and cooperation between the two countries, Japan and Philippines that were built over time. Such things that were built through time aren't just something you can just easily erase.

It should be realized that JICA's objective isn't just limited to helping and providing our country with assistance for its economic development, but also to help people especially us, the young citizens, to see things in a greater perspective and to inspire us to take action. We, young Filipinos of the present generation, should be the ones most knowledgeable of that fact. After all, from our generation comes the future leaders of the nation.

STRENGTHENING THE FILIPINOS' LIVES: THE JICA PROJECT

Bruce Ruther J. Linstaco

Holy Trinity School of Padre Garcia Batangas, Mataas na Kahoy Branch

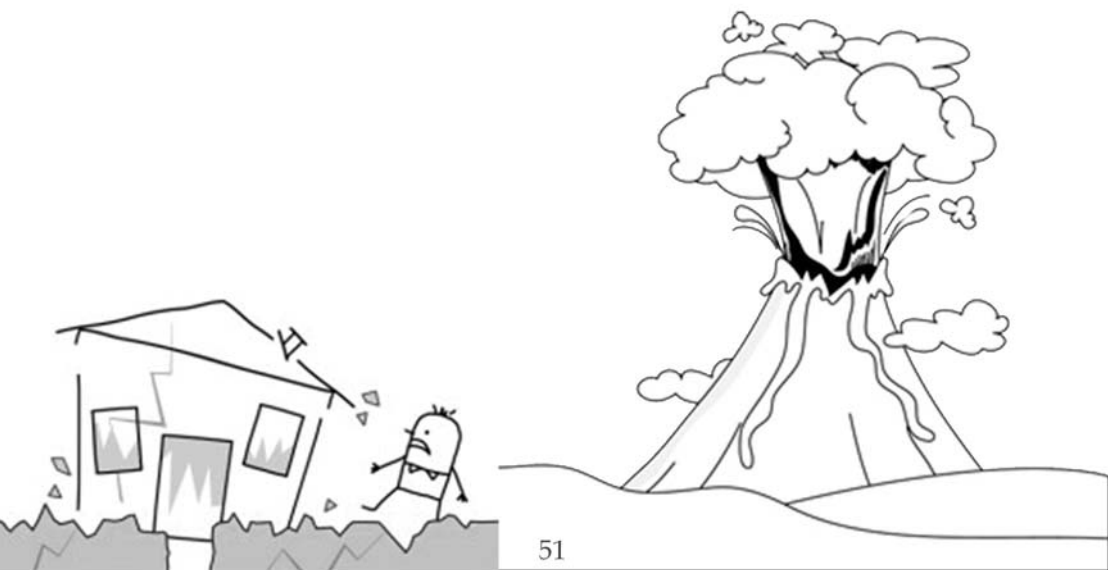


Earthquakes, Super Typhoons, floods, landslides, agricultural problems, food and oil hikes are just some to mention about the problems of our home country, the Philippines. These calamities had cost the lives of a great number. The Philippine government though, is having problems of their own, consuming most of their time in solving these relevant cases of corruption rather than focusing in developing the state of those people devastated by great calamities and giving the ways of taking their lives back. Fortunately, a hope emerged, the JICA Project; Japan International Cooperation Agency has already made proposals with Laos, helping Laos rise again from a tragic disaster. The JICA project is now on its duty in helping the Philippines. Recently, the CALABARZON region, transportation has become a problem in some places and now, with the JICA in effect, they upgraded the technology and now is on construction, making transportation among low areas easier and better. JICA also helps in the development of some public schools in our region like sending computers and laboratory apparatuses which are of great help to the Filipino students and Batangasños like me.

The JICA Project has its missions for the development of Philippines: Japan will share their knowledge about their technologies, human resources development, capacity building, policy and institutional improvements, and provision of social and economic infrastructure. Well here in Batangas, I haven't seen much of the changes that JICA will apply, but I hope that these changes will really help my community and those people which will really benefit from these various activities. If buildings are to improve and local government becomes very effective, I would gladly contribute and cooperate among the activities that will promote development in poverty.

What I really want to see is the human resources development, which will help people become knowledgeable about calamities and civilized manners. People will also be aware about what is happening around them, what the problems we are facing are and what they can do to help decrease the problems. If this will happen nationwide, Philippines will really change into a better country, civilized people are now living, making everyone be responsible and taking jobs, creating livelihood for each family and becoming a competitive country in every aspect. Once we see the results of the JICA project, we will know what could happen in the near future.

I would really be happy to join the JICA project. As a young citizen, it is indeed a must to learn more about my surroundings and current phase of my country. If the JICA would greatly affect my entire community, I would encourage everyone in my community to join me and the JICA's mission in improving the lives of Filipinos. To communicate to those people who are interested in to attain the great future that everyone wants, I too would launch campaigns in social media networks so it could be seen nationwide. So, if the Filipino people will have unity, it would greatly affect the process of development, investing through the JICA project, and inspiring other nations to do so. Surely it could make the Philippines a better place, but we must be sure that we shall not abuse the blessings that we receive from those concerned about us and especially God whom love us all.



CREATING PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE

Kyla Presmei C. Depakakibo
Philippine Science High School - Western Visayas Campus



“Classes are suspended in all public elementary and high schools today...”

As Mayor Jed Patrick Mabilog of Iloilo city declared over the phone in a local morning show on July 8, 2014, everyone stopped their tracks. He continued to speak, citing yesterday’s heavy downpour followed by scattered rampant flooding as cause. Students couldn’t contain their excitement (who wouldn’t want a rest day, after all?) as some took the chance to spread the news to their friends themselves. Shouts of relief for missed quizzes and assignments weren’t left unheard in Facebook and Twitter while others lamented for waking up early and braving the ice cold water in the morning only to be told otherwise. But what seems to be a typical Tuesday morning was something more, something special.

We Ilonggos are no strangers to events like these. You might think it’s hardly news since we’re basically living in a tropical archipelagic country that experiences an average of twenty typhoons per year. And in our case, so is the frequent flooding in the city and outlying areas.

One of the first things a newcomer in the City of Smiles would discover for him/herself aside from the affordable shops in Downtown area to eateries that offer the best Lapaz Batchoy and Halo-Halo is the fact that flood occurs at an alarming rate of once in every two years, other times almost annually instead. It is likely due to Iloilo’s natural topography of plains and lowlands that leave it vulnerable to large scale flooding and landslide.

The ironic thing is it doesn’t even have to be a typhoon. Did it rain hard last night? Expect the locals to cluck their tongues and shake their heads in resignation the following day.

Suddenly, the sight of murky water on the streets with the occasional assortment of garbage seems not to be strange at all.

And once in a while, when the wind is strong and the roof makes several resounding 'Plop!' sounds in the rhythm of drums in Dinagyang, you can hear one say a certain four letter word with obvious displeasure: baha. Flood.



No matter how large the scale nor how long its duration may be, the flood leaves nothing untouched upon its wake. It has been repeated over the decades, several times to count even before Frank. That perhaps, was the last straw.

Frank was The Typhoon, the storm that brought the city down on its knees with waters higher than man in a mere matter of minutes. Everyone was caught unprepared and many lives were lost, homes destroyed and livelihoods shattered on that fateful day. I was one of the fortunate who happen to live on higher ground and was spared from the turbulent waters. But my friends and cousins, who were only a few barangays away, were not so lucky. My aunt was trapped in the bathroom and she had to break the window just to go out while struggling at the strong currents of then neck high water.

It was God's grace that she managed to take hold of the makeshift rope: blankets and sheets tied together, that lead to the rooftop of the highest house where everyone else sought refuge. Others have it much worse. Despite six years have already since passed, like the rest of Ilonggos, I never forgot.

There were several things during The Typhoon that contributed to the eventual overflow such as miscalculated weather predictions and human error but in the end it all boiled down to one thing: it mustn't happen again. The government sought to put matters into their hands as they brainstormed and planned on what would end this recurring problem once and for all. This is where JICA – Japan International Coordination Agency, comes into the picture.

To be honest, I had no idea what JICA meant nor its aims and involvement locally and nationwide until now. Though I've heard talks and murmurs on the streets of social and urban development projects 'in partnership with Japan', it was only quite recently when I realized how much they have contributed to the city's progress and economy in a span of a few years. For instance, the deemed worthy solution: to create an artificial river that serves as waterway and an escape channel for water to flow from the intersection of Panay's two great rivers: Aganan and Tigum in Pavia, Iloilo, to the Iloilo Strait that would lead eventually towards the sea.

At first, several were skeptical that the Iloilo Flood Control project would work in the first place. But looking back from the present, it most certainly did.

The much more recent flooding was less severe as the water level only ankle deep. But in actuality it was much larger than the 260mm recorded water volume during Frank last 2008. Were it not for the floodways, it would have certainly been another repeat of history. And it is to take note that this time it's more likely due to the clogging caused by construction of the drainage system and road-widening and reblocking projects by the Department of Public Works and Highways. But that's another story.

I am grateful that with JICA's projects, such as Iloilo Flood Control project, it has made my community a better place to live in. Therefore as young citizen, it is a must that I make it worthwhile and relevant

through my own little way which is to spread more environmental awareness and start the change within myself before sharing it with others. We have learned our lesson the hard way and therefore must not commit the same mistakes again. And what could be the more perfect chance than this? While JICA made a literal pathway to save lives, it is now our turn to take the lead in this pathway of success for the future generations to come.

THROUGH WENDELL'S EYE

Sean Elijah Siy

Ramon Magsaysay High School (Cubao)



“Bumalik po kayo ‘tay.” (“Come back dad.”)

After receiving an ice cream from my dad Ambo, I ran away smiling and rushed through our gate. I heard his cheerful voice and he replied, “Oo! Babalik ako!” (“Yes! I will go back!”) I knew he was happy that time and I’m happy as well. I wish it will become endless. Cut.

6 years ago, I’m one of the actors of the short film *Parolado*. I was very young that time and that is the first and only movie I was ever part of. I have no idea and also it was my first time to act and I only listen to instructions from my director. I dramatized as the son of the protagonist Ambo who was portrayed by Ronnie Lazaro. I was tagged as Wendell in the movie. He is a 10-year-old elementary student, he grew up not knowing his father, and of course, he love toys just like me when I was 10. My role is not that challenging for me because we do have something in common. But at the last part of the movie where I have to buy an ice cream from my dad who worked as an ice cream vendor after being in jail for more than 10 years, I have to say my line, “Isa pong chocolate para kay nanay at cheese po para sa akin.” (one chocolate flavor for my mom and one cheese flavor for me please.) And after he handed me the ice cream, “bumalik po kayo ‘tay.” (“Come back dad.”) It’s quite challenging for me because I feel like my character is the poetic justice of the story. The movie will end at the scene where Ambo is pushing his cart wearing a big smile on his face.



Now I understand the story of the movie. It's all about a man whose life went astray after a reckless accident which brought him into jail. After receiving his parole, he realizes that the railing bars extends at the world outside the jail and he still found himself inside the cage in people's eye. The movie is full of sadness but thank God it's fiction. But we have to face the reality that everything is true. I found out that the film *Parolado* (2008) was produced in cooperation with

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This was produced for parolees to show them that there are alternative ways of setting themselves free than to stay forever in jail. The mission of Parole and Probation Administration (PPA) is to give prisoners hope that there is still chance to become free not only in jail, but also from mistakes that they committed.

I have watched a documentary hosted by Kara David and it focuses on two women who are still in jail and they are imprisoned for almost 40 years. One of them is 65 years old and one of her eyes is blind because she developed diabetes while she was in jail. The hardest part of her story was that her family doesn't visit her anymore since 2008. The other is 90 years old and she is bedridden. They wish for the president to sign their parole so they could still enjoy life before they pass away. I realized that the project of PPA is very important because some prisoners are hoping for parole so they could be free and they could still live and laugh with their family. The parole only symbolizes the freedom inside the jail but not in ourselves.

"Where there is unity there is always victory." –Publilius Syrus

JICA collaborated with PPA to give prisoners a key to set themselves free in jail and this key is a change for good. We are given a chance to change and the first thing we should do is not to make things right but to forgive ourselves and move on.

The project made me realize that life is difficult yet wonderful so never stop giving hope for other people. As a student and part of the community, I will remind all of the people by supporting this kind of project that hope is not with the judges' decision but it is in our heart.

HAND-IN-HAND FOR DEVELOPMENT

Lualou Joy R. Kitong
Baguio City National High School



The Philippines is one of the many countries that need help in developing. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is one big helping hand, pulling up outstretched hands of ones who are needy. JICA in the Philippines aims to promote development in order to secure a better future for the Filipinos. JICA provides cooperation in the economic development of the Philippines and help in reducing the country's poverty. Moreover, JICA also lends a hand in times of natural disasters.

How does JICA promote this said cooperation?

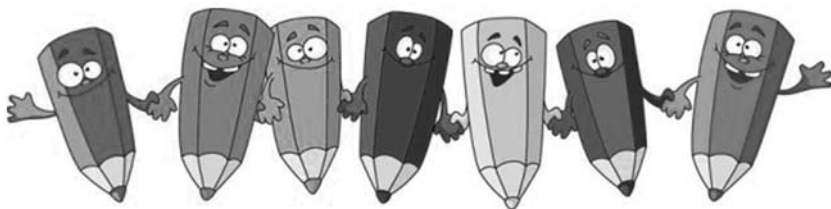
First and foremost, JICA provides "Official Development Assistance Loans" or ODA Loans. ODA Loans support developing countries by providing funds to finance the country's developing efforts. This where the "Grant Aid" comes in. The Grant Aid is a financial cooperation from Japan that does not obligate the developing countries concerned to repay given funds.

In addition, JICA also provides civil participation in response to requests from developing countries. JICA launches programs wherein different groups or individuals from Japan work together with local residents. These groups or individuals participate in assistance activities.

Last but not least, the Japan Disaster Relief (JDR), also from JICA, provides relief supplies to areas who are struck by major disasters. Japan disaster relief includes medical help and also rescue teams. Mainly, the JDR aids developing areas but it is not limited in said locations. The help that goes out is in response to requests from deeply affected countries or agencies.

In what ways do these help the Philippines?

As stated earlier, JICA aims to promote economic growth and poverty reduction. The Grant Aid from ODA is a big help when it comes to financial woes in the country. With many corruption issues in the local government, it is almost troublesome to think that Japan is still willing to give funds to the Philippines. That being said, the funds that are granted upon the Philippines should be more of a wake-up call. The Philippine government has many promising projects just waiting to be done. The Grant Aid might help push these proposals into reality. Furthermore, the civil participation provided by JICA helps locals to be more active in the community. Being guided and having people to work with is a big help. The schools for disabled children in the Philippines are in need of more people who are willing to teach the less fortunate children and the civil participation from JICA might just help with this.



JICA as a whole, doesn't only help the Philippines, it encourages it to strive harder and do more. Being dependent on JICA might not be too much of a good thing because if we always lean on something for support, it eventually gets too loaded. As a young citizen of the Philippines, it is quite difficult to find the words to express what I think I can do to make JICA's efforts on the Philippines last and not be taken for granted by future generations.

In my perspective, the Philippines could do so much better and be so much more than what it is now.

As far as my eyes can see and as far as my ears can care to hear, Filipinos are so tired of being the “dependent” country. The Philippines wants to be recognized as a country that can stand on its own. Unfortunately, it is not solid enough for the development it craves for. At its state right now, the Philippines does need support and help from countries that are out of its league.

JICA has become a dear friend, responding to the cries for help. It is just to be grateful but it's not right to keep asking for more. As I've said earlier, the Philippines could do so much better than what it's doing now. When I watch the news, all I see are petty drama over politicians who don't get along. Sometimes, the headlines say the same thing but in different words. It is rather embarrassing to think that the Philippines has so much it can show off to the world and yet it focuses less on the real problems; therefore leaving the citizens oblivious and indifferent.

As a teenager, voicing out opinions and sharing valuable information is rather unnerving; it is a frightening task but I must do it. I think what I can do to make JICA's efforts worthwhile is to crack open the minds of my peers and share the huge help Japan has given our country. It is time to accept that we are not surviving on our own and that at the moment, we need help from other countries. When we ask for support, we must not be too dependent. It is not right to keep receiving generous help but never really doing anything except take it for granted. Some citizens are not even aware that JICA exists; this in itself is wrong and offensive. Each and every one of us are benefactors to the generosity of JICA and therefore we need to at least be updated on new programs that are launched by the agency. It would be even better to actually be involved with JICA's activities.

There will come a time when the Philippines will be able to stand on its own. Right now, it is crucial to be dependent. Development is not something that can be achieved alone; even the greatest minds in science sought for guidance at some point in their lives. JICA has extended a helping hand and the Philippines is right to accept it. For now, holding on for support is what needs to be done. When at last Philippines can be independent, it's no question that JICA played an important role.

“JICA; A CATALYST FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM”

Pamana Mae A. Laza
Baguio City National High School (Main)



The world has come to that certain point wherein we are doing the best that we can to be united, strengthening ties between two and more countries so that we may all be able to stand up and strive towards a single goal. The truth is that it isn't an easy road, and yet it is a risk we are all willing to take if it means a supposed 'better tomorrow' for everyone. This sort of willingness can be exemplified by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, otherwise known as JICA, as they extend a helping hand for developing countries such as the Philippines.

The said organization has several missions and visions that mainly involve the betterment of each individual and each country. Our motherland has been given the opportunity to experience the help from JICA, solidified by the several projects that they have started, or will start, on. These include projects that are involved with our health (Maternal and Child Health Care Project), water resources or disaster management (Strengthening the Flood Management Function of DPWH), and several more. As a student, my personal favorite would be one that basically affects my education. Thus, allow me to elaborate more on the Project for Supporting Senior High School Modeling in Selected Technical Vocational High Schools.

Due to the fact that graduates of the Basic Curriculum are too young to legally be part of the labor force and they haven't fully mastered the necessary competencies to become a worker, the government of the Philippines decided to enhance the curriculum to the K-12. The JICA decided to give a helping hand and join in on the thrust on the education reform here in the Philippines. With this in mind, it wouldn't be such a burden on the government and associated agencies in dealing with the reform.

Taking into consideration that other projects that gear towards social security, environmental management, education, health, and so on and so forth, we can say that JICA has truly given a great impact on the Philippines in the timespan of sixty years.

As I look into the situation and further dissect the greatness of JICA, I can freely say that I do want to become part of the said program. Not only does it exhibit the qualities of what a good neighbor should be, it also doesn't ask for anything in return. And so, what can I do to show my full appreciation towards the organization?

At a young age, I can most probably contribute and participate in their projects by joining seminars, involving myself in the allotted activities that also include this essay writing competition, and by simply giving my full support towards what the JICA does. But I guess the best thing that I can do right now is to simply start these changes within myself, and allow this change to spread towards a group of friends, to my classmates, to my batch mates, to the school, to the city, to the region, to the country, and to the world.

Change is a domino effect that enables people to clamber up towards the ladder of success and unity. It is a progression of what we need, to what we want, to what we can do for everyone's benefit.

And so, JICA is truly an impeccable piece of art given by fate, or destiny, or maybe even God himself, to help in making the Philippines, and the world, a better place.





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