

# JOCV

## Half a Century of Civil Participation

JICA's Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) program celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. Since the first JOCVs were dispatched to Laos in 1965, the program has continued to answer calls for assistance from governments of developing countries, training and sending eager young volunteers to share their skills and knowledge in local communities around the world. Participants, who

are between the ages of 20 and 39, provide assistance during two-year assignments in one of about 200 sectors, such as education, nursing, auto mechanics, IT, and sports.

JICA over the years has inaugurated several other similar volunteer programs. The Senior Volunteers program, which targets participants between 40 and 69, began in 1990, while the Youth and Senior Volunteers for Overseas

Japanese Communities began providing assistance to communities in the Americas home to people of Japanese descent in 1996.

JICA's volunteers live and work alongside local residents, carrying out their activities with an emphasis on fostering self-reliance. The programs aim to contribute to social and economic development through community-based efforts to address poverty, healthcare, ed-

ucation, and other issues faced by developing countries. To date, nearly 50,000 volunteers have been dispatched to 96 countries and regions. Participants' activities have served as "grassroots diplomacy" fostering mutual understanding between Japan and the partner countries. This issue of *JICA's World* looks back at 50 years of volunteer work and introduces the efforts of JICA volunteers around the world.



1960s - 1970s

- 1965 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers program inaugurated. Five volunteers sent to Laos.
- 1966 Kenya becomes the first African country to receive JOCVs.
- 1968 El Salvador receives JOCVs as the first Central American country to do so.
- 1972 Western Samoa is the first country in the Oceania region to receive JOCVs.
- 1978 The first JOCVs in South America go to Paraguay.

1980s - 2000s

- 1981 JOCVs are dispatched to Thailand, the thirtieth nation to receive volunteers.
- 1990 JOCV program reaches 10,000 volunteers dispatched; JICA Senior Volunteers program initiated.
- 1992 Hungary becomes the first Eastern European JOCV recipient.
- 2000 JOCV program reaches 20,000 volunteers dispatched.
- 2010 JICA volunteer programs reach a cumulative total of 40,000 volunteers dispatched.