



Senior Volunteers participant Shoichi Morita watches carefully as students make plastic tubing.

Bringing Lifelong Experience as Senior Volunteers

JICA's Senior Volunteers program targets participants aged 40–69 who have a strong desire to utilize the specialized knowledge and skills cultivated during their careers in cooperative activities in developing countries. Volunteers are dispatched for two years to provide direct assistance, as well as to serve as advisers in a wide array of areas, through efforts including hands-on training and classroom-based instruction.

BRINGING WORK SKILLS TO COLOMBIAN YOUTHS

Senior Volunteers participant Shoichi Morita provides instruction in plastic molding techniques to students at a job-training center in Colombia. After a long career developing components for Nissan Motor and Fuji Xerox, Morita applied to the Senior Volunteers program following his retirement. Like

many volunteers, he was motivated by a desire to put his years of experience to use in cooperative efforts overseas.

The job-training center is part of a national network of schools run by the Colombian government aimed at providing individuals who have graduated from high school, but are unable to afford college, with the knowledge and training they need to find employment. Students receive 1–2 years of training free of charge in such fields as manufacturing, business and commerce, culinary arts, and nursing. There are around 1 million students enrolled in the program, gaining skills and knowledge that will be valuable in the Colombian economy.

Morita was dispatched to a school in Colombia's third largest city of Santiago de Cali that provides training in resin application and metalwork. He instructs students in the production of films and tubes, working alongside other teachers at the school to teach four classes of around 25 students each.

One aspect of training that receives especially close attention from Morita is bettering the practical aptitude of his students. When a question comes up in class, he notes, students have a strong tendency to be satisfied with merely knowing the correct response. This can be problematic to their development, however, as it is focusing on the processes

behind an answer that leads to broader understanding and true problem-solving skills.

To address this issue, Morita has gradually increased the time students spend in practical training. He feels confident that the experience they gain by applying their hands and minds toward finding solutions will serve them well as they move forward.

Practical training includes instruction in the 5S system, a mindset that for decades has sustained the outstanding safety and efficiency of Japan's manufacturing industry. Representing the five Japanese words *seiri* (sort), *seiton* (set), *seiso* (shine), *seiketsu* (standardize), and *shitsuke* (sustain), the system is intended to instill a high level of professionalism to complement practical skills. In Morita's view, there is no substitute for applied learning when getting students to understand an idea like *shitsuke*.

TRAINING FUTURE CHEFS IN FIJI

Tourism is a vital industry for Fiji, a South Pacific country consisting of over 300 coral atolls. Kitchen and service staff busily go about their duties at Fiji's many luxury resort hotels. Meeting the culinary needs of guests is a challenge that requires kitchen staff capable of producing an array of cuisine, including Japanese, French, and other ethnic dishes. Helping Fiji to meet these needs is Senior Volunteers participant Yukihiro Yamashita.

Yamashita instructs second- and third-year students in Japanese and French culinary arts at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Studies, a three-year institute attached to the Fiji National University. In his work he focuses on training students to prepare dishes that integrate locally grown ingredients.

Yamashita worked part of his career as the head cook on a cruise liner. During that time he ran a kitchen with close to 40 cooking staff consisting mainly of young men and women from developing countries. "I relied on them immensely in my work,"



explains Yamashita. "After stepping down from my position I began to feel that I wanted to help these young people out." This eventually led him to become involved in the Senior Volunteers program.

Arriving in Fiji, Yamashita quickly found areas that needed work. "Students lacked in the basics," he explains. "For one, they weren't punctual. When it came to cooking, the way that students didn't wash their hands or sat on the floor while they prepared dishes showed that they had not received instruction in basic sanitary techniques. They also hadn't been shown how to use a knife or control the cooking flame. I felt they would not last very long at a hotel, or any other job they found, without the appropriate skills. It was up to me to teach them."

In the beginning, Yamashita struggled to bridge cultural gaps. For example, some students were unable to cook with beef or pork due to religious reasons. Through regular and persistent dialogue with college administration, though, he was able to get his ideas across. His efforts have been instrumental in changing how instructors at the college view punctuality and sanitation.

Yamashita smiles as he tells about what it means to him to be a volunteer: "I'm always glad I came to Fiji when I see graduates of the school working at a hotel. It's a pleasure to teach students and watch them grow each step of the way."

Morita constantly checks the students' reaction to make sure they understand what is being covered.



Senior Volunteers participant Yukihiro Yamashita talks to students during a culinary class.