

JICA Turkey Office



Emin Ozdamar

Senior Program Officer

When Emin Ozdamar was a student at Ankara University in 1981, he was interested to learn about one of his professors' experiences with JICA. He started collecting information about Japan and JICA and later became a Japanese Government Scholarship student at then Tokyo University of Fisheries, where he studied from 1989 to 1991.

The JICA Turkey Office was established in 1995. At the time, Ozdamar was Assistant Professor at Ondokuz Mayıs University in Turkey. He later worked in the aquaculture department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, through which he became involved in the early stages of a JICA project to develop fish culture in the Black Sea. He utilized his abilities, knowledge, and experience to ensure the project's successful start-up and implementation. His success working on that project further motivated him to join JICA in 1997.

Ozdamar's first involvement with JICA was with fishery and disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects. He has since worked as a national chief of technical cooperation projects in DRR, agriculture and fisheries, regional development, and related third-country training programs.

His work with JICA has had an impact on land as well as at sea. In 1999, two huge earthquakes

on the Northern Anatolian Fault Line resulted in more than 18,000 deaths. When Japanese disaster relief teams arrived in Yalova province after the earthquake, Ozdamar was with the mission. The team rescued one person and helped the victims. After observing the poor construction quality and the disorder in the community, Ozdamar realized that Turkey needed disaster awareness programs. He began working creating and implementing DRR projects. He supported training of more than 250 district and deputy governors and 300 city mayors; some are now governors or mayors in such disaster-prone provinces as Istanbul and Bursa.

The number of JICA's projects in Turkey has been declining over the past decade. However, Japan's experience is still needed; sharing both countries' experiences will also be beneficial to other disaster-prone countries. Ozdamar hopes that exchange between Japan, Turkey, and other countries will make his country more disaster-resilient, in addition to raising awareness of other essential topics such as the environment, education, and food security. He continues to work as a bridge between Turkey and Japan, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience to build a safer and better world.