

# 8 Making Use of Experiences, Skills and Know-how

—Senior Volunteers—



A senior volunteer teaches car engine repair in Bolivia.

## How the Program Started

### Emerging Interest in Volunteer Activities

The Senior Volunteer Program was preceded by the Senior Cooperation Expert Dispatch Program, which commenced in 1990 as a scheme aimed specifically at older people who have a strong interest in technical cooperation activities in developing countries making use of their skills and experience. Under this program, volunteers with extensive skills and plentiful professional experience between the ages of 40 and 69 were recruited. The recruits were then dispatched to developing countries in accordance with requests received from the governments of those countries. The program might be described as a senior version of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) Program. In fiscal 1991 when the program got underway, four volunteers were sent to Malaysia.

There was subsequently a significant increase in the degree of interest shown in volunteer activities within Japan. Therefore, to clarify the status of this program as a support program involving volunteers, the name was changed in 1996 to the Senior Volunteer Program. There has since been a solid increase in both the number of countries to which senior volunteers are sent and the number of volunteers.

It was around this time that the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck the Kansai area of Japan, and a serious accident involving crude oil leaking from a grounded tanker occurred in the Sea of Japan. On both these occasions the activities of rescue volunteers were covered by the media, stimulating increased interest in and understanding of volunteer activities. Within this social context, the Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Law was enacted in 1998. There has also been an increase in the number of companies that allow employees to take time off to engage in volunteer activities.

In addition, since 1991, Japan's ODA budget has been larger than that of any other country. As interest in assisting developing countries has increased, the public has come to realize the importance of providing participatory cooperation\* with a clearly visible profile. Such was the context in which the Senior Volunteer Program came into being and developed.

As the economic strength of Japan and other advanced countries grew, and the economic gap between advanced and developing countries increased, a situation also arose in which the skills and knowledge needed by developing countries matched those that had supported Japan during its period of high economic growth. There was thus increased demand from developing countries for skilled personnel with a wide range of professional and social experience. In the sense that this is a program capable of responding precisely to the needs of developing countries, the importance of the senior volunteers is constantly growing.

### International Cooperation with Public Participation

As Japan's ODA budget has been the highest in the world since 1991, more citizens have shown interest in ODA and a willingness to participate in volunteer activities. The International Cooperation Festival, a public participation event held annually at Hibiya Park in Tokyo starting in 1992, has been attracting many citizens.

Applicants for Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers exceeded 9,000 and those for senior volunteers totaled 1,844 in fiscal 2002. These figures indicate how many citizens are interested in overseas volunteer activities and participating in them. Internationalization of regional communities, active exchange at a citizen's level, and global awareness through information supplied by the media lie behind this rise of interest in international cooperation.

In view of this change, JICA has been attempting to expand the Senior Volunteer Program. Whereas 87 people were dispatched overseas under the program in fiscal 1999, the figure for fiscal 2000 quadrupled to 323, and increased to 464 in fiscal 2002. Senior volunteers are active in as many as 51 countries, a number that is likely to increase substantially in the future.

The activities of senior volunteers are closely connected to daily life in local communities of partner countries. Volunteers are assigned to hospitals, schools, companies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rather than to the central government. These activities might be described as cooperation with public participation.

## From Recruitment to Dispatch

### 1. Dispatch Record

As of the end of March 2003, 685 senior volunteers are active in 46 countries, which means that a total of 1,281 participants have been involved in the program since its inception.

### 2. Recruitment and Selection

To correspond to the rapid growth in the Senior Volunteer Program, revisions have been made in terms of the way the program is implemented. The method of recruitment was changed from preliminary registration to open recruitment. Recruitment explanatory sessions are held twice a year, in the spring and fall, in various parts of the country. During the spring 2002 recruitment campaign, explanatory sessions were held at 97 venues nationwide and were attended by 4,433

## Front Line

### ● Jamaica Instructors Working in Vocational Training Schools

#### Support for Employment Promotion

Senior Volunteers

#### Address increasing unemployment

The high rate of unemployment, said to be 15%, is a serious problem in Jamaica. As a countermeasure, the Human Employment and Resource Training Trust (HEART), initiated by the government, builds many vocational training schools nationwide. Fourteen technical high schools were built in addition to the vocational schools, providing various vocational training to solve the unemployment problem. Increasing unemployment can damage public safety, increase social instability, and is likely to strike tourism, which is one of the major financial resources in the country.

At vocational training schools, classes are taught according to a teaching outline called the module curriculum. This curriculum, developed by the National Training Agency (NTA) together with experts, provides three courses from level 1 to level 3 according to the progress of training. Since the teaching

contents are systematically clarified in the module curriculum, teaching contents can be standardized at all vocational schools. Thus, there will be few differences in the teaching levels of teachers with different skill levels.

#### Applying the know-how of an experienced volunteer

A senior volunteer is actively working at local vocational schools and Jose Marti Technical High School in the capital Kingston. Many local vocational schools are located in a harsh environment. One in Seaford Town is located on a mountain where no phones can be connected. One in Junction is located on an undulating hill where water supply is often cut off. Nevertheless, senior volunteers are actively implementing various activities



A senior volunteer teaches car repair in Jamaica.

utilizing the know-how of their experiences.

Also as cooperation for expanding employment opportunities, a dispatch of bamboo craft instructors to NGOs is being planned for the purpose of increasing incomes through handicraft using an introduced species, bamboo that is threatening the ecosystems of native species.

(JICA/JOCV Jamaica Office)

people, of whom 985 subsequently applied as volunteers. During the fall 2002 recruitment campaign, explanatory sessions were held at 96 venues nationwide and were attended by 3,067 people, of whom 851 applied to become volunteers.

The selection process involves primary and secondary screenings. In the primary screening, examination of written submissions and medical documents are examined. In the secondary screening, a detailed medical checkup is performed in addition to a personal interview and a language test. In fiscal 2002, 464 applicants were recruited and dispatched as volunteers.

### 3. Pre-dispatch Training

Successful applicants undergo approximately 30 days of training prior to dispatch. The first 10 days are devoted to orientation in connection with basic knowledge of Japan's ODA and JICA programs, in addition to the systems connected to the Senior Volunteer Program, health management, safety measures and travel preparations. The final 20 days are devoted to language training. The languages that are taught include English, Spanish, Indonesian, Thai and other regional languages. Participation by accompanying family members is permitted, and many people take part in training with family members.

### 4. Health Control

As volunteers will be working in environments that are completely different from Japan's, advisory doctors are on hand at the JICA Medical Support Center. In addition to lectures on sanitation provided as a part of the orientation prior to dispatch, medical checkups are administered and health and treatment advice are given during assignment dispatch.

## Addressing New Needs

### Effective Use of Human Resources

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, with the end of the Cold War between the East and West, political and economic reforms started mainly in former socialist countries. They specifically resulted in the abolishment of national controls, the construction of democratic political systems, and the progress of market economies through the introduction of competition principles such as privatization of public corporations, which ODA has been supporting.

Under these conditions, needs for cooperation in the fields of modernization of factories and corporations, production controls, business management and quality control are increasing in addition to the existing assistance needs for health and



A senior volunteer provides rehabilitation to a child with physical disabilities in Laos.

medical care, agriculture and education. Many developing countries admire Japan's post-war reconstruction and are eager to learn about the related know-how. Accordingly, requests for the dispatch of senior volunteers in these fields have been increasing recently, and are expected to further increase in the future.

JICA has been implementing new strategies in order to effectively link the diversifying needs of developing countries with domestic human resources. For example, in fiscal 2000, it introduced new program that include the "qualified applicants program," in which applicants who fulfill certain criteria are registered as being qualified and then offered for service to developing countries. There is also the "group dispatch program" in which a number of volunteers from the registering body in Japan are dispatched to the same destination, thus increasing the effectiveness of the cooperation.

In addition, for the purpose of promoting international cooperation by local governments and building friendship with overseas cities, the Sister City Senior Volunteer Program was introduced in fiscal 2001, further enhancing the use of domestic human resources.

## Cyclical Form of Volunteer Activities

### Activities Supported by the Public

JICA's mission statement is "human development, national development, bringing people together." The Senior Volunteer Program translates this mission statement into practice: the contribution that volunteers make directly to the

development of human resources in developing countries assists the process of national development, while the relationships established between the volunteers and the local community constitute a fine example of international exchange.

Moreover, it is particularly significant that it is people from among the Japanese general public who are engaged in these activities. Since most of the participants are engaged in volunteer activities in foreign countries with which they have no prior experience, there is obviously no guarantee that their efforts will invariably result in success. But the true significance of JICA volunteer programs, including the Senior Volunteer Program, lies not merely in the results but also in the opportunity these programs provide for spontaneous participation from among members of the community at large.

Volunteers who return to Japan after completing their terms discuss their experiences with the people around them,



A senior volunteer works at the Jalapa Anthropology Museum in Mexico.

and this encourages yet more people to volunteer. They also maintain the relationships they have established with friends in the countries where they worked and retain emotional links with these countries. This cyclical form of development is precisely the by-product that JICA's volunteer programs are expected to create.

We have been hearing about the "borderless society" for many years. In the sense that this program supports international exchange and activities, especially at the citizen's level, the necessity and indeed the very existence of the Senior Volunteer Program are sure to grow in importance.

## Front Line

### ● Chile Youth Development by Teaching Judo

#### Mind and Culture in Developing Countries Opened by Sports

Senior Volunteers

##### A trip to a judo competition

A senior volunteer who teaches judo has been instructing mainly at colleges, high schools and judo clubs in Santiago City, using the Chile Judo Federation as his base office. In addition to daily practice classes, he accompanies students to judo competitions. Some competitions are held in far locations, and one was held in Iquique, approximately 2,000km north of Santiago. A senior volunteer accompanied more than 20 players and a coach from Santiago University to this competition, which took 28 hours one way on a long-distance bus.

##### Visiting small villages for instruction

In January 2003, the senior volunteer started visiting Vicuna, located approximately 500km north of Santiago,

to teach judo. Approximately 30km before reaching Vicuna in a ravine near the desert, there is a small village called Quebrada de Tarka where residents make a living by raising livestock. Houses are scattered and there is no electricity in the village.

A student from this village, a member of a judo club in Santiago, once asked the senior volunteer instructor, "Please visit my hometown, Quebrada de Tarka, to teach judo on the way home from teaching in Vicuna". The senior volunteer visited the village to teach judo right away.

Driving approximately 20 minutes in the mountains off the main road connecting Vicuna and La Serena, there is a village community center. In the center, 28 used tatami-mats were laid on the floor and more than 50 male and female students and about 70 spectators gathered after hearing that a judo instructor



A senior volunteer teaches judo.

was coming. However, none of them were wearing judo suits. Later, 25 judo suits were delivered to this village. The senior volunteer commuted to this village every Saturday and Sunday to teach judo, and came back to Santiago on the following mornings by overnight bus. The volunteer effort led to the opening of a competition for players with no grades in this village in March, acquiring participants from other towns as well.

(JICA Chile Office)