JICA Follow-up Cooperation in Balkan Region

Follow-up cooperation, as program for maintaining and developing effective results of Japanese technical cooperation, has two main purposes.

The first one is to extend project life as hard-type follow-up cooperation by repairing equipment and facilities provided through technical cooperation or grant aid.

The second purpose is to maintain and expand the achievements of technical cooperation known as soft-type follow-up cooperation. It is accomplished by providing assistance to ex-participants of training courses in Japan, or counterparts of past technical cooperation, when they engage in seminars, research, study or creating manuals.

Some of the successful examples of soft-type follow-up cooperation, in Balkan region, are introduced here.

MACEDONIA

An employee of the Food and Veterinary Agency, who participated in JICA training course in Japan, applied for a follow-up cooperation with an aim to improve the level of people’s awareness for food sanitation in Macedonia. Although Macedonia has been implementing new legislation in accordance with the EU requirements, there was no presentation of these standards in the public, mainly due to lack of finances.

Through this follow-up project, the Food and Veterinary Agency succeeded in making a good impact on the society regarding food sanitation habits and the knowledge about food safety. Some of the project activities included preparation and publication of promotional material and educational presentations and seminars in 5 municipalities.

KOSOVO

After learning about Japanese export promotion policies and measures at JICA training course in Japan, an employee of the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA) applied for a follow-up cooperation with an aim to improve the role of his institution in effective and strategic promotion of Kosovo companies and products abroad.

The project enabled KIESA acquire necessary knowledge on effective export promotion by participating in FOODEX Fair in Japan in March 2015, where they presented products of selected companies from Kosovo.
At the request of Development Agency of Serbia (hereinafter DAS), JICA dispatched an advisor for investment promotion from May 2015 to June 2016.

After having conducted interviews with the companies which are already operating in Serbia or in the region, the investment promotion advisor analyzed Serbian industrial structure and investment trends. Moreover, he came up with some suggestions and task analysis regarding the investment promotion and Serbian investment potential.

In June 2016, two officials from DAS were invited to Japan to attend a seminar on Serbian investment climate. More than seventy Japanese companies participated in the seminar and some of them have already expressed interest in Serbia.

JICA will continue discussions related to the cooperation with Serbian government in the above mentioned field.

Compared to the other European countries, in Serbia, breast cancer causes high mortality rate and it urges for an action.

As a response to this, in December 2015, JICA launched a "Project for Improvement of the National Breast Cancer Prevention Program" which will be implemented for the period of three years. So far, JICA has dispatched experts who conducted verification and analysis of the tasks and current situation related to the prevention of breast cancer in Serbia.

In June 2016, counterpart training program was organized in Yokohama. Through the cooperation with Yokohama City and Yokohama City University, Japanese breast cancer prevention program was presented through the site visits and lectures.
Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia are rich in tourism resources, varying from the historic cities, archaeological remains and abandoned fortresses of different conquerors, to the natural resources of Balkan mountain range, Danube River, different valleys and lakes spanning across the region.

Although Japanese visitors to Croatia are increasing every year, those to Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia are less than 10% altogether. Shared current challenges for those three countries include differentiation of tourism products to earn competitive advantages against other popular touristic destinations in East or West Europe, their shortcomings in foreign tourism market information including Japanese market, and others.

In order to address these challenges, a Regional Tourism Advisor has been dispatched since May 2016. A series of activities are planned both nationally and regionally, aiming at establishing ultimately a sustainable tourism promotion mechanism. Planned activities include: full participation in Tourism EXPO Japan, organization of fam. and media tours for selected private tour companies and media representatives in Japan, regular exposures to popular SNS, Japanese web blogs, and cooperation with other medias in the region, including writing articles for the in-flight magazines, to name a few.

**MACEDONIA**

**STUDY AND SEMINAR ON ECOSYSTEM BASED SOLUTION FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (ECO-DRR)**

In May 2016, JICA implemented the Study on Ecosystem Based Solutions for Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) and organized the Seminar of Eco-DRR in Macedonia. Recently Japan positively transmits information of Eco-DRR and attracted attentions in the world. JICA also strengthen its commitment to Eco-DRR.

For Macedonia, JICA supported the Project on Development of Integrated System for Prevention and Early Warning of Forest Fires to establish a system for corresponding disasters from 2011 to 2014. As an outcome of the Project, Macedonia Crisis Management Centre (CMC) which was a main counterpart of the Project maintains a system for disaster risk reduction in collaboration with Public Enterprise Macedonia Forest (PEMF).

Analysing natural environment and benefit of forests through site surveys in Macedonia, adaptation and needs of Disaster Risk Reduction by utilizing ecosystem was confirmed. Based on the result of the study, possibility of further cooperation will be considered with CMC and relating institutions in Macedonia.
In May and June 2016, a terminal evaluation on the project for Improving IT Education at Mixed Secondary Schools with Gymnasia Course was implemented. The Project commenced in 2014 and will be finalised in August 2016. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, JICA started providing assistance to improve education of Information Technology (IT) in 2005 by assisting Mostar Gymnasium in the City of Mostar where was heavily affected by Bosnia Herzegovina conflict in 1990’s. After the cooperation to the Gymnasium, JICA has implemented and expanded three phases of projects to cover all gymnasiums and mixed secondary schools with gymnasia course, and improved standard of IT education throughout the country.

Furthermore, the projects were engaged in establishing Common Core Curriculum of Information Technology for providing standardised education regardless of ethnicities. Finally, the curriculum which was compiled through the Project activities is authorized and published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Though establishing common curriculum in Bosnia and Herzegovina which has different curriculums by ethnic groups is big challenge in IT education, the project left a first step for unity.

Three pilot projects are being implemented at three cities namely Tirana, Cerrik and Vau I Dejes. In Tirana, the survey on the amount of the recyclable waste has been conducted by the project team. In accordance with the result of the survey, the collection rule has been drafted after the discussion with recyclers. As a next step, a platform for collecting bags is expected to be installed soon.

After the local elections held last year, most of the municipalities are still under the process of integration and merger this situation hinders the smooth operations of various municipal works including waste management. Project team is, however, dealing with the situation in a flexible manner to make the pilot projects successful.
On 31st May 2016, JICA Balkan Office hosted a seminar on Japanese ODA Cooperation in Albania. The seminar was a great opportunity to introduce the basic policy, principles and characteristics of ODA in Albania through the presentations of past and current projects, implemented by JICA in this country. About 70 participants, including the former Ambassador of Albania to Japan, key personnel from the Ministries cooperating with JICA on projects in Albania, as well as other representatives of the counterpart organizations, attended the seminar in Tirana.

On behalf of the Government of Albania, H.E. Ms. Milva Ekonomi, Minister of Economic Cooperation, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship, expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation for the long-lasting cooperation with the Government of Japan and JICA. In her opening remarks, Ms. Ekonomi stressed the importance of the experience, knowledge and skills the specialists from public administration, gained through participation in JICA training programs, further implementing them in their daily working process. Moreover, she expressed her utmost appreciation for the grant aid in the field of agriculture and health care, which are widely recognized among the public in Albania, as well as for the cooperation on the projects for Tirana sewerage system and Tirana thematic urban planning.

Representatives from the counterpart organizations introduced specific projects which have been carried out in Albania. The current projects are related to the environmental conservation, financial inclusion and urban planning.

This ODA Seminar was a timely occasion to reiterate that the opening of the Embassy of Japan in Albania is planned for 1st January 2017. Both, Ms. Ekonomi and Mr. Abe, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office, expressed their hope that the opening of the Embassy would further strengthen the friendship and cooperation that ties these two countries.
For the first time, since the Serbian Kendo Federation was established, the Women’s National Kendo Team won a medal at European Championship. Ms. Hitomi Kumon, a JICA Senior Volunteer (SV) at Kendo Federation, was the Women’s National Team coach at this Championship.

This year European Championship was held in Skopje, Macedonia, from 1st to 3rd April. More than 500 participants from 38 countries took part in this championship, which made it the largest continental competition so far. The Serbian National Team consisted of 8 women, 9 men and 1 junior.

After the first defeat by Switzerland, Serbia women’s team won over Czech Republic, Romania, the Netherlands and Germany. In the finals they encountered with the strongest French team, which eventually won 5:0. However, winning silver medal is the biggest success for the Serbia Women’s National Kendo Team so far.

Ms. Kumon, who was the women’s team coach, modestly commented that the success of the women’s Kendo team was also the result of hard work and devotion of her predecessors, JICA SVs at Kendo Federation Mr. Mori, Mr. Matsumura and Mr. Kashiwagi. All of them, including Ms. Kumon, managed to improve the techniques of young *kendoka* and successfully instruct their coaches.

The goals for the future period include preparation for Belgrade Cup which will be held in October this year, as well as for the next year’s European championship in Hungary. After the World Championship 2018, which will take place in South Korea, European Championship 2019 will be held in Serbia.

On 4th April 2016, “Nasa kuca” an association supporting persons with developmental disabilities, in collaboration with JICA, organized planting of cherry trees at the Japanese garden, which is a part of Botanical garden *Jevremovac*, in Belgrade.

Mr. Toshiki Maeda, a JICA Senior Volunteer at “Nasa kuca”, coordinat-ed this activity with an aim to include people with developmental disabilities from this association into planting and maintenance of cherry trees at the Japanese garden.

The plan for the next period is to engage beneficiaries from “Nasa kuca” in weekly maintenance of cherry trees in order to continue the newly-established cooperation between JICA, “Nasa kuca” and Botanical garden *Jevremovac*. Moreover, activities will be continued next spring as well, when new Japanese azaleas will embellish this green oasis in the center of Belgrade.