



Osama Al Najjar

Palestine

Director of Renewable Energy
at the Palestinian Energy Authority

Like roughly 70% of residents of the Gaza Strip, Osama Al Najjar of the Palestinian Energy Authority is a refugee. He spent his earliest years in a camp in Gaza after his family was forced to leave land owned by his grandfather.

Gaza is heavily reliant on Israel for its energy needs. Electricity is in short supply and blackouts are daily occurrences, making energy self-sufficiency a critical issue in Palestinian efforts toward establishing an independent state. To address this issue, the authorities are looking to renewable energy.

In 2011, Najjar followed up earlier ideas of introducing solar energy to Gaza by taking part in a JICA-supported training program providing solar technology to developing countries. Training sessions held in Japan's Kansai region focused on expanding participants' practical knowledge of solar energy through activities including visits to megasolar sites, factories producing batteries for solar systems, and home manufacturers.

"Gaza's abundant sunshine can be transformed into electricity, stored, and used when conventional sources stop," says Najjar. "With the training I received in Japan I came to understand that introducing small-scale systems would work efficiently here. I also learned the importance Japan places on perseverance. It's important to keep pushing ahead, no matter what barriers stand in the way." He added that he was honored to be mentioned at the UN General Assembly in September 2014 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Since going back to Gaza, Najjar has worked on a project supplying photovoltaic (PV) electricity to the intensive care unit at Gaza's largest hospital as a JICA follow-up project involving ex-participants in the training program. The PV unit started its operation before conflict broke out in Gaza in 2014 and helped many people's lives in a time of great turmoil, when all of Gaza was under blackout as the power plant and the feeders from the Israeli side were destroyed.

Restoring Peace to Society

The scars of armed conflict continue to impact the lives of countless people, destroying their livelihood and forcing them to live in impoverished, desolate conditions. In this section we profile three individuals who are working to bring peace back to conflict-ravaged lands.



The breakup of the former Yugoslavia sparked an ethnically driven conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina that killed 200,000 and displaced over 2 million. In Srebrenica, the fighting was so vicious that even now, nearly two decades later, the population of the city has only recovered to roughly 40% of its prewar level. Tensions and mistrust among Muslim Bosniaks and Serbs have prevented the country from pursuing development effectively. In 2006-13, JICA experts provided assistance for agricultural programs in Srebrenica that looked to promote cross-ethnic cooperation in rebuilding communities and improving the livelihood of residents.

In 2014, in response to a request from Bosnia Herzegovina, a new project headed by JICA expert Hiroki Miyoshi was launched to extend the results seen in Srebrenica to neighboring Bratunac and Rogatica. As in Srebrenica, JICA is providing support for beekeeping, orchard development, sheep farming, and other agricultural programs with the goal of promoting cooperation among different ethnic groups in community-building efforts.

"The project looks to gradually build trust among ethnic groups by giving residents a wide variety of opportunities to come together and work side by side," explains Miyoshi. "Our goal is to have city officials carry on these efforts after JICA's involvement in the project is completed. To help facilitate this, we are enlisting the cooperation of not only farmers but also administrators from each of the cities."



Hiroki Miyoshi

Bosnia Herzegovina
JICA Expert



Kozue Misumi

Syrian Refugee Camp in Jordan
Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer

Since 2011, Syrians fleeing their country's civil war have continued to flood into neighboring Jordan. The kingdom, which has a population of roughly 6.3 million, is now host to over 600,000 refugees. Roughly 80,000 live at the Zaatari refugee camp, which is located 15 kilometers from the Syrian border in northern Jordan.

Kozue Misumi, a member of JICA's Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, has worked at the camp since January 2014. Misumi developed a deep fondness for the Syrian people when volunteering as a physical education instructor at a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria prior to the civil war. She was inspired to come to the Zaatari refugee camp out of a desire to help ease the

hardship of the refugees living there. Currently, Misumi regularly visits six facilities in the camp, where, among other work, she runs activities providing emotional support and comfort to children.

"We dance, make origami and crafts, and play games with the children to help ease the emotional pain and stress they feel," explains Misumi. "They have had to endure so much. It's therapeutic for them to be able to play and laugh out loud. Through my work the children have come to trust me. They've begun to open up and share what they have been through. As I listen I hold their hands, wipe their tears, and hug them. They face a harsh reality and there's nothing that gives me more pleasure than to help ease their burden, even if only slightly."