

# Cooperation of JOCV for Middle-income Countries — Case Study of Malaysia



Project Sites Malaysia

## 1. Background and Objectives of Evaluation

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) promote international volunteer activities of youths, to offer not only cooperation in technical transfer, but also encouragement in international mutual understanding and capacity development for the participating youths. However, middle-income countries<sup>1)</sup> that have achieved certain technological standards tend to require volunteers of a higher capacity and ability. Thus, the number of cases in which JICA had been unable to recruit qualified volunteers increased. Moreover, the countries expect JOCV to render necessary service rather than technical transfer, hindering the JOCV to implement activities on their own initiative.

To conduct efficient and effective JOCV projects in middle-income countries, JICA should confirm the outcome of projects achieved by JOCV dispatched in the past, organize factors that promote or inhibit outcomes, and review policies for future dispatches.

For the abovementioned purpose, JOCV activities in Malaysia were chosen as a case for this evaluation, as the country has the longest history of JOCV activities among middle-income countries, with 36 years of experience and over 1,000 dispatched JOCV.

The objectives of this evaluation are as follows:

- Consider the future approach for the JOCV projects by conducting a case study on Malaysia a middle-income country that has already reached a certain technological level.
- Derive lessons and recommendations to improve JOCV projects for middle-income countries.

## 2. Selection of Evaluated JOCV Activities

### (1) Selection of Middle-income Countries

In this evaluation study, in order to examine factors that are common to JOCV activities in middle-income countries, six countries (Chile, Mexico, Hungary, Saint Lucia, Poland and Malaysia) were chosen as "middle-income countries possessing a certain level of technology" based on the UNDP human development index (HDI) and per capita GDP (Figure 1, Table 1).

### (2) Selection of the Case-study Country and Countries for Comparison

This study chose four countries as cases to collect and analyze information for evaluation through questionnaire.

Although Thailand is not regarded as a middle-income country according to the criteria described in (1), it was selected to provide a regional balance, as it maintains a comparable HDI level in the same region as Malaysia.

Hence, Malaysia is set as the target country of this case study while Thailand, Mexico, and Hungary are set as comparative countries.

### (3) Target Fields

Four technical fields, namely Japanese language instruction, social welfare, agriculture, and sports were chosen as study targets, as they had the largest number of dispatches to the six countries chosen in (1) between 1994 and 2000. However, agriculture was excluded from the scope of study because not many in the field had been dispatched to Malaysia in recent years. Conclusively, five

<sup>1)</sup> Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines middle-income countries with GDP ranging from US\$ 766 to US\$ 9,385, with US\$ 3,035 as the cutoff point for lower-and higher-middle-income countries. In this report, "middle income country" refers to countries in the upper range of per person GDP of the United Nations Development Plan Human Development Index.

fields were chosen, adding vocational training, which showed an increase in the number of dispatches from the early to mid-1980s, and environment, which number has been increasing recently.

To narrow the focus to current problems and future issues in JOCV activities in middle-income countries, the following numbers of JOCV were selected from those that returned from Malaysia in the five years from 1996 to 2000

- (1) Japanese Language 37
- (2) Social welfare 38
- (3) Sports 4
- (4) Vocational training 24
- (5) Environment 7

### 3. Evaluation Team

**Team Leader:**

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At a residential school (RS) where JOCV members were assigned as Japanese language instructors. The ex-counterpart is holding the volunteer-developed Japanese language textbook used in the RS. (Alor Setar, Keda State)

### 4. Period of Evaluation

25 February – 13 March 2001

### 5. Evaluation Framework

**(1) Evaluation Perspective**

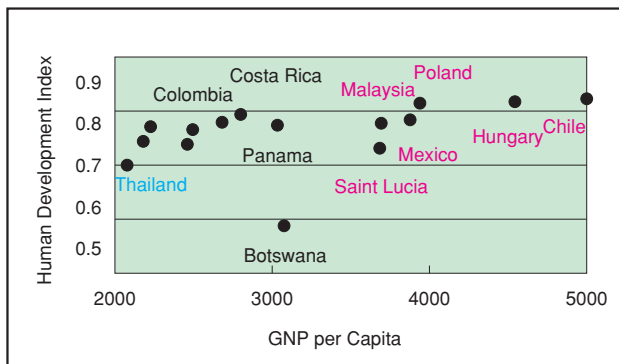
The JOCV project is an international cooperation that contributes to the economic development of the recipient country through the self-initiative of young people as well as one of the governmental undertakings to foster youth and international exchange as official tax-funded activities. It is important that the evaluation produces satisfactory results from the perspective of the recipient country, volunteers, and the government project. Taking these into account, the evaluation focuses on the following points.

- 1) Effectiveness of technical cooperation
- 2) Effects other than technical cooperation (youth fostering, international exchange, and promoting Japanese citizens' understanding of international cooperation)

**(2) Evaluation Standards**

- 1) Satisfaction of the recipient country
  - Are the activities of JOCV highly appreciated?
- 2) JOCV's self-evaluation
  - Is the self-evaluation of the individual's technical cooperation high?
  - Is the JOCV's satisfied with the volunteer experience?
- 3) Relevance of project as a government undertaking
  - Did it contribute in strengthening the relationship between Japan and the recipient country?
  - Does the recipient country have extensive need

Figure 1 Type of Countries Receiving JOCVs



for the JOCV?

- Were the JOCV activities efficient?
- Is the effect of JOCV activities sustainable?

### (3) Unit of Evaluation

Individual evaluations of each JOCV member were collected and added up according to fields and geographical areas.

## 6. Study Method

The following studies methods were conducted in the target and comparative countries.

### (1) Questionnaire Survey

Accepting organizations of the volunteers (total of 102 institutions in Malaysia alone; 58 respondents)

Returned volunteers (total 335; 45 respondents)

Contract Coordinators, other donors

### (2) Interview Survey (Malaysia)

Recipient country's agencies in charge of international cooperation, related central ministries and agencies, assigned institutions (23 in total), JICA Malaysia Office, JOCV technical advisors, Secretariat of JOCV, Contract Coordinators, and JOCV members on-dispatch (29 in total)

### (3) Document Survey

Reports from returned volunteers (138)

Various study reports

**Table 1 Dispatch of JOCV in Middle-Income Countries**

	GNP per person (US \$, 1998)	Human Development Index	Year JOCV dispatch started	Number of dispatched volunteers
Chile	4,990	0.826	1997	49
Hungary	4,510	0.817	1993	85
Poland	3,910	0.814	1993	64
Mexico	3,840	0.784	1994	68
Malaysia	3,670	0.772	1966	1,072
Saint Lucia	3,660	0.728	1996	27
Thailand	2,160	0.745	1981	383

## 7. Tendency and Characteristics of JOCV Activities in Middle-income Countries

The tendency of the direction and result of JOCV activities for the six countries indicated in 2.(1) and Thailand can be categorized into three types based on a review of dispatch records over the past seven years.

### 1) Type 1: Cases in which cooperation was provided to a specifically poor or socially disadvantaged group of population (Mexico, Chile)

In Mexico, the GNP per capita is high, and the national development policies include sophisticated issues such as privatization of state-owned enterprises and regional decentralization. However, the internal disparities between the poor and wealthy are serious. As a result, many JOCV activities aim to redress the discrepancies in wealth by focusing on agriculture or healthcare for the poor.



One of the CBR (Community Based Rehabilitation) centers where the cooperation team of volunteers in the field of social welfare provides care for disabled persons under 18

**Figure 2 Comparison of the Number of Dispatches in Seven Years**

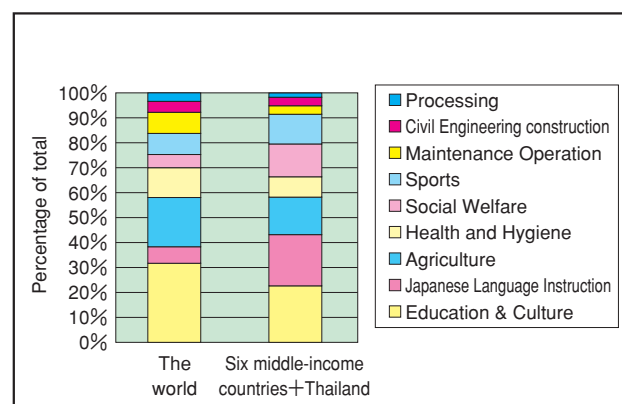


Figure 3 Trends of Dispatch in Countries Studied (1994~2000)

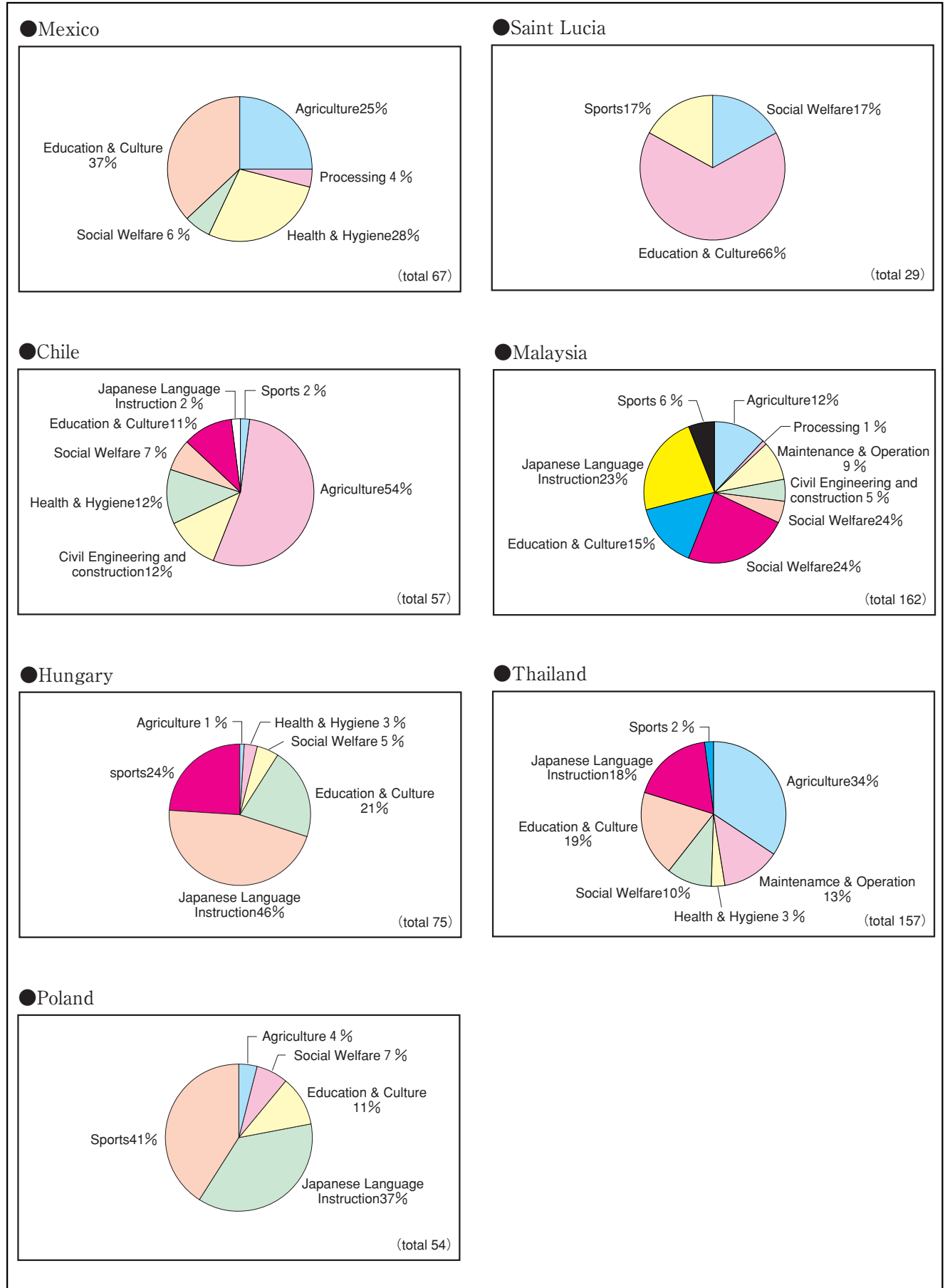
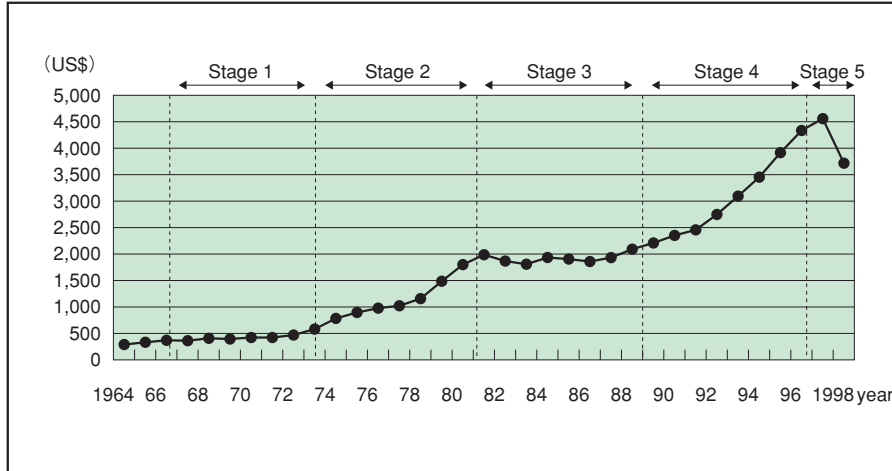


Figure 4 Trend of GNP per capita in Malaysia



**2) Type 2: Cases in which cooperation was provided specifically for education and culture (Hungary, Poland, Saint Lucia)**

Countries that have raised the transition to a market economy and privatization in their national development plans as their foremost development issue such as the East European countries, already had advanced technology and mature social systems before the collapse of socialist regime. Therefore, they do not require volunteers for technical cooperation. Hence, the focus of cooperation under this category was placed on Japanese language teaching, sports instruction (for sports related with Japan: Judo, karate, and baseball), math and science education, and other educational and cultural areas. International exchange was emphasized in East European countries.

**3) Type 3: Cases in which cooperation covered a broad range including 1) and 2) (Malaysia, Thailand)**

Cooperation covered a broader range, including Japanese language teaching, sports instruction, and other educational and cultural areas, as well as social welfare and vocational training for socially disadvantaged people. Dispatches were also implemented in newer fields such as environment conservation and information technology (IT), as needs were increasing in these fields.

As mentioned, tendencies in dispatch varied even among countries that had similar levels of GNP or HDI.

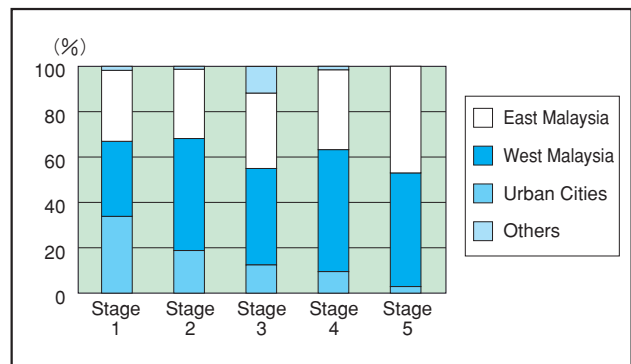
**8. Characteristics of Dispatches to Malaysia**

From 1966 when the first five were dispatched to FY2000 1,072 members of JOCV were dispatched. The 36 years of history can be divided into five periods based on the transition of the GNP in the country (figure 4), and the trends and characteristics of each period were analyzed.



Archery class run by Keda State Sport Association where members were assigned. Children get coaching after School

Figure 5 Changes in Areas of JOCV Members' Assignment



## (1) Overview of JOCV Dispatch

<Stage 1: 1966 to 1972>

Dispatches started soon after the JOCV scheme was established, experimentally in the initial stage. Reflecting the needs in Malaysia and the supply capacity of Japanese volunteers at that time, cooperation was focused on agriculture, forestry, fishery, and sports unique to Japan.

<Stage 2: 1973 to 1980>

Under the Third Five-year Plan, Malaysia implemented many land reclamation and settlement projects. In the industrial development field, an industrialization policy was promoted by adopting foreign investment, and the rate of economic growth was around 7%. With such high economic growth and industrialization, many of the JOCV were dispatched in the vocational training field.

<Stage 3: 1981 to 1988>

In this stage, per capita GNP reached US\$2,000, and the field of cooperation of JOCV began to diversify. Dispatches for social welfare and environmental fields began in this period. Also, cooperation to the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) drew attention, and the number of dispatches to the settlements increased. The dispatches to the settlements started mainly on vegetable cultivation and household management, but began to diversify to include kindergarten teaching and public health nursing.

<Stage 4: 1989 to 1996>

In the period of rapid economic growth, the GNP growth rate of Malaysia reached 8% annually. Dispatches in this period, shifted from fields directly linked to industry such as vocational training, to fields of education and culture such as Japanese language teaching, as well as social welfare issues for socially disadvantaged people.

<Stage 5: 1997 to 2001>

As a result of Malaysia's rapid growth, the expectations of the qualifications of JOCV members' rose. The propriety in continuation of dispatches to Malaysia was discussed, and a new direction of the dispatch system was explored. During this period, dispatches for social welfare, sports and Japanese language teaching increased.

## (2) Transition of Dispatch Regions

Figure 5 shows changes in the regions where the JOCV were dispatched. There was little change in the ratio of the number of JOCV dispatched to West Malaysia and East Malaysia (a part of Borneo) over the period, with 60-70% of all dispatches sent to West Malaysia. In Stage 5, dispatches to East Malaysia increased to 50% of all dispatches. In addition, large cities used to account for 50% of the dispatches to West Malaysia, but the trend changed with time, with more dispatches shifting to other areas.



A class at Polytechnic institute where a volunteer member was assigned. Currently, a senior volunteer is working there.

## 9. Evaluation Results

### (1) Effect as Technical Cooperation

#### 1) Evaluation from the Recipient Country

The recipient country understood that JOCV activities were basically technical cooperation at the grass-roots level. The members of JOCV are not as skilled as other experts and senior overseas volunteers, but recipient countries expect people with higher levels of technical knowledge and experience to be sent. Nevertheless, JOCV activities were rated highly by assigned institutions. In the questionnaires, 94.8% answered that they were either "satisfied" (50%) or "very satisfied" (44.8%).

#### 2) JOCV Members' Self-evaluation

In the questionnaire, 42% responded that they "almost achieved the goal set in the original activity plan," 18% answered that the goal was "achieved considerably," and 9% responded that it was "very much achieved." In other words, nearly 70% of the respondents evaluated themselves rather highly. The more the assigned institution's needs were met and the JOCV

#### Box

As a result of the overseas education program of the Ministry of Education of Malaysia based on the Look-East Policy, more than 100 Malaysian teachers received education in Japan on Japanese language over five years. As the number of teachers returned gradually increased, the teaching structure changed from two JOCV members per residential school to one JOCV member and one Malaysian teacher. Today, almost every school has a Malaysian teacher who conducts Japanese classes.

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technical levels suited the needs, the more successfully the goals were achieved. Thus, it can be said that coordination with the assigned institution was very important. Also, according to the response, the most crucial promoting or inhibiting factor for the activities was "the assigned institution's understanding towards JOCV activities." This suggests that the assigned institution's understanding had major influence on the achievement.

### **3) Relevance as Government-based Undertakings**

Malaysia have a relatively organized systems and clear development concepts, so when qualified JOCV members were dispatched, it was easy for the technical cooperation to be effective. Therefore, the relevance as a governmental undertaking was high. However, there were many cases in which cooperation teams were expected to render services, and activities tended to be polarized into the cases in which the JOCV could take initiative or cases in which they could not.

### **4) Evaluation by Sector**

In the Japanese language teaching field, both the recipient country and volunteers rated the activities highly. In particular, 92.9% of JOCV responded in their self-evaluations that they were generally satisfied, the highest out of any of the fields as shown in BOX. Malaysian teachers succeeded Japanese language teaching activities commenced by the JOCV, showing their sustainability and clear relevance as governmental undertakings. Overall evaluations were high.

In the social welfare field, since there was a shortage of physical and occupational therapists, Malaysia had a high demand for JOCV in this field. According to the questionnaire survey sent to assigned institutions, all respondents replied that they were satisfied or very satisfied, and future dispatches were strongly requested. The JOCV tended to render services to those institutions, but they understood the recipient country's conditions and were therefore highly satisfied in general. On the other hand, a question remained regarding the sustainability as a governmental undertaking since there were no counterparts nor adequate policies to human resources development in this field in Malaysia.

In the environmental field, the recipient country's evaluation and further needs were both high. Volunteers were sent to Borneo, a natural treasury of world wide significance where the needs toward eco-tourism were high. Since most of the local staff did not have any specialized experience, the potential area of contributions of the JOCV was wide ranging. However, the recipients had high expectations for tangible output such as collect-

ing samples and preparing specimens; and technical transfer was subordinated. Although the JOCV were very satisfied with the research, they indicated problems of assigned institutions, such as a lack of comprehensive vision for environmental conservation, vacancy of counterparts, and insufficient coordination between organizations. A governmental undertaking in the environmental field requires coordination with various organizations, and the activities cover a wide scope therefore a clear division of roles within an overarching program is essential. Without such a structure, it is difficult to expect effective outcomes from a technical cooperation.

In the vocational training field, the recipient country's evaluation varied depending on cases, but the overall satisfaction was not very high compared to other fields. This was due to the high technical level already attained by Malaysia and the fact that the counterparts had high academic qualifications and were too busy to be working together. The members of JOCV cited incongruities of technology and difficulty in human relationships as causes for dissatisfaction and did not give high self-evaluations. Although Malaysia had focused on this field, and human resources were in fact short, it was not particularly effective to dispatch volunteers to work in areas that were already so technically advanced.

Regarding the field of sports, the need of Malaysia was to train athletes. Sometimes, the Malaysian side hired professional coaches from other countries. As such, evaluation of the JOCV activities depended on the results of sports competitions, therefore the environment was not too favorable for them. Accordingly, the degree of objective achievement of self-evaluation was lower compared to other fields. As a governmental undertaking, it was the field in which Malaysia could have secured its own human resources, and overall evaluation would have to be considered low.

### **5) Evaluation by Region**

In the volunteers' self-evaluations, there were no significant differences in terms of the degree of objective achievement by region. However, in JICA's country-program for Malaysia, redressing regional disparities had been a key issue, and all assigned institutions were aware of problems in alleviating the gaps between East and West Malaysia, or urban areas and rural areas. Development of the impoverished strata and agricultural rural areas would benefit particularly from the JOCV activities, since they could be most effective as grass-roots-level cooperation. This suggests that the emphasis on cooperation should shift to East Malaysia.

**(2) Effectiveness Other than Technical Cooperation**

**1) Evaluation from Recipient Country**

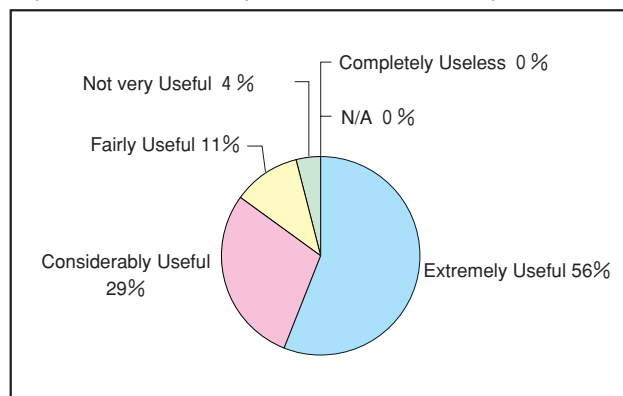
Judging from the questionnaire results, a little less than 90% of respondents felt that they had gained a better understanding of Japan and the Japanese people. Interview results showed that many had felt impressed by the diligent attitude of the Japanese. In the Japanese language teaching field, many responded that having a native Japanese increased student motivation. Also, after returning to Japan, 63.9% of the JOCV members



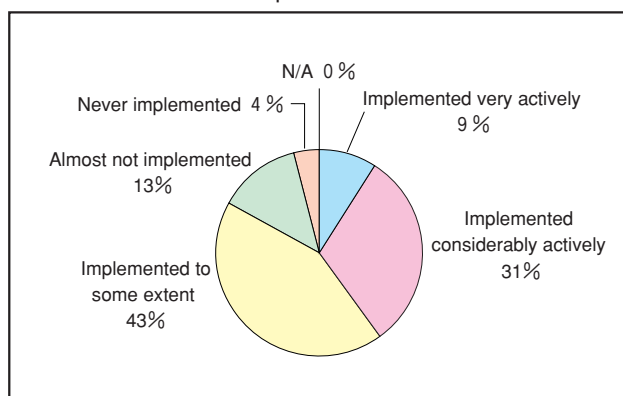
Equipment provided to FELDA from JICA. It has been utilized with transferred technologies after the JOCV members' return to Japan

**Figure 6 Results of Questionnaire Survey of JOCV members**

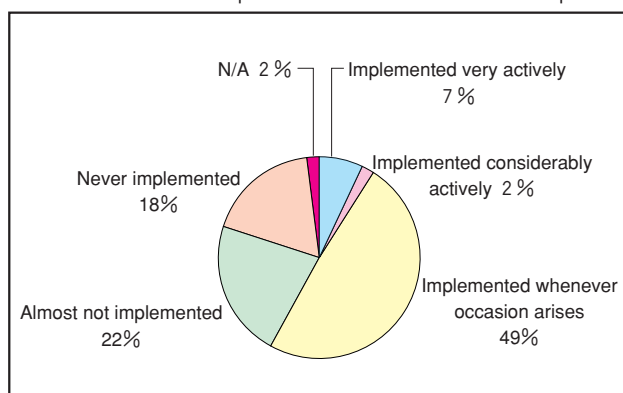
Improvement of Technique and International Cooperation Skills



Activities to Introduce Japan



Activities to Introduce Recipient Countries and International Cooperation



continued exchanges with assigned institutions to some extent. Hence, it can be concluded that satisfaction for projects other than technical transfer was also high.

**2) JOCV members' Self-evaluation**

Over half of the JOCV members responded that their experiences were very helpful in improving their technical and international cooperation skills, and the satisfaction rate was over 80%, when the number of respondents who answered "fairly helpful" was added.

More than 90% said that the activities had a positive influence on his/her maturity, suggesting that the experiences of the JOCV were effective in the human development of young people as well.

During their assignments, 80% initiated activities to introduce Japan as part of an international exchange.

As for introducing their JOCV experiences after returning to Japan, 50% responded that they did so when they had an opportunity, and about 7% said they did so actively. However, 40% said they did not conduct such activities at all because they did not have the time or opportunity.

**3) Relevance as Governmental Undertakings**

JOCV activities are the only volunteer work being conducted on a governmental basis in Malaysia at this time. Malaysia has adopted the "Look East Policy," aimed to develop the country, looking to Japan as a development model. Through JOCV activities, the two countries are likely to continue establishing their relationship, and JOCV activities are particularly relevant for encouraging mutual understanding and interaction.



### (3) Characteristics of Cooperation Activities in Middle-income Countries, in the Case of Malaysia

#### 1) Technology Advancement

As a general characteristic seen in middle-income countries, the technology level is quite advanced. Recently in Malaysia, technology has become more advanced as industries have developed and income risen. Consequently, the technical levels required for JOCV activities have also risen. Regarding vocational training, the knowledge and technology of the JOCV members were not qualified for the needs of the recipient country, as in many cases, counterparts actually had higher academic records and more knowledge.

#### 2) Economic improvement and budget allocation

JOCV activities were greatly influenced by the recipient country's improved economic strength and ability to secure funds independently. As a positive example, in the Japanese language instruction field, the Malaysian government sent over 100 Malaysians to Japan with its own funds to study in Japan for five years. Due to these human resources. The Japanese teaching methods established by the JOCV members could be handed over to the Malaysians. Through securing funds to supplement JOCV activities with its own technology and human resources, Malaysia successfully sustainably.

A negative example was seen in the vocational training field, in those cases where JOCV were dispatched to where Malaysia had already hired necessary professionals with its own funds. Similarly, in the sports field, there were cases in which professional coaches were hired, which reduced the significance of JOCV activities. Despite the recipient country's financial leeway, they

often wanted to continue receiving JOCV as free labor force. Such cases are not appropriate for any JOCV dispatch that has its focus on technical cooperation.

#### 3) Redressing Regional Disparities

In Malaysia, redressing gaps in the country is a key issue. Also, Malaysia has three ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese and Indian. The country may have high technical abilities overall, but the ethnic diversity hinders technology diffusion. Furthermore, East and West Malaysia are geographically separated, and since Sabah and Sarawak have a very strong sense of independence, it is often difficult to diffuse technology. Consequently, it is very relevant for JOCV to work directly with the poor.

## 10. Recommendations for JOCV Dispatch to Malaysia

### Recommendation 1: Implement Detailed Background Studies Compared to Lower-income Countries

Since the matching of recipient country's needs on technical levels and type and the ability of the JOCV members will greatly influence the effectiveness of JOCV activities, the background study for requests should be implemented with greater precision. In addition, JOCV coordinators should consult well with the recipient country to comprehend their development policy, request policy, and needs.

### Recommendation 2: Planned Cooperation Aiming for Small-scale Takeoff in Each Field

A priority field set with a five-to ten-year perspective for strategic dispatch should be established, and outcomes should be reached efficiently. To select the priority, it is essential to consider whether "the recipient country has needs in the field," "JOCV activities effectively satisfy required technical cooperation" and "it is possible to gain sustainability, or expect sustainability in the future."

A review of the objectives of cooperation and alignment with other schemes are also important in boosting effectiveness. Positioning JOCV projects as one scheme among JICA country programs should be considered.

Further, strategic requests based on a long-term perspective and attempts to secure human resources on the part of the central government are also essential.

### Recommendation 3: The Diversity of JOCV Activities Should be Stated Clearly and announced

The stereotypical image of JOCV activities up until now was of "going deep into the local community," "activities at the grassroots level," and "physically cooperating with local residents in developing countries with harsh



Interview to ex-counterparts

living environments"; and the JOCV members themselves had these in mind. However, the gap between these images and the reality in middle-income countries was wide, and it often led to a temporary decline in motivation. Given this, the JOCV members should be given an understanding of the diversity of the place of assignment and activities, the recipient country's request and needs, and the purpose of the dispatch through the application process and JOCV publicity activities.

## **11. Lessons for JOCV Projects in Middle-income Countries**

In this evaluation study, Malaysia was chosen for the case study in deriving lessons and recommendations for JOCV projects in middle-income countries. However, it became clear as the study progressed that although these countries were technically middle-income countries, the dispatch content differed greatly depending on each country, varying from cultural exchange to aid for the poor.

On the other hand, common issues of cooperation projects in middle-income countries were found, such as: helping the JOCV members to understand the diversity of JOCV activities before dispatch; considering systematic cooperation aiming at the small-scale take off from aid for each field; and conducting more detailed background studies for requests based on the fact that there often are regional gaps concerning levels of technology and human resources.