

## BRIDGING CULTURES, BUILDING FUTURES: JICA VOLUNTEERS STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

### JICA NEPAL'S STUDY TOUR HIGHLIGHTS IMPACT OF VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN GANDAKI PROVINCE

JICA Nepal organized a 2-day Study and Observation Tour to Pokhara and Syangja with 32 participants on 8-9 January 2026, including Government of Nepal officials and media representatives, accompanied by JICA Nepal team, led by the Chief Representative Mr. Matsuzaki Mizuki. The tour showcased JICA Volunteers' contributions and key projects in Gandaki Province.

The tour fostered knowledge sharing and encouraged the replication of successful practices.



All the study tour participants at the Regional Tuberculosis Centre (Provincial Disease Control Center). The facilities of the regional center was constructed under the JICA Grant Aid in 1989 and include the buildings and guest houses.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) volunteer program is playing a significant role in Nepal, with dedicated Japanese volunteers actively engaged at the grassroots level. Their efforts aim to support local development, enhance community resilience, and foster a lasting friendship between Nepal and Japan.

JICA volunteers are contributing in various sectors, bringing diverse skills and fresh perspectives to address local needs and promote sustainable development.

At the same time, they transfer their skills to the local communities and individuals and promote cultural exchange between the two countries. JICA volunteers thus act as powerful representatives for cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration.

Since 1970, 1,473 JICA volunteers—including both Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) and Senior Volunteers—have served across Nepal in the fields of agriculture, health advisory services, traffic safety, education, forestry, sanitation, sports, and community planning.

Currently, about 26 volunteers are working in local communities in Bagmati, Koshi, and Gandaki Provinces. Of these, four volunteers—including one in fisheries, two in education and one in fruit growing—are serving in Gandaki Province.

### ADVANCING AQUACULTURE RESEARCH

JICA Senior Volunteer Mr. Yoichi Ohashi has been engaged in zooplankton research at the Fishery Research Station in Begnas, Pokhara, for the past year and a half, contributing significantly to aquaculture research in Nepal.



Mr. Ohashi at Fishery Research Station in Begnas.

Mr. Ohashi arrived in Nepal in April 2024 and will continue his assignment until April 2026. With more than 30 years of experience in fisheries, his expertise is being used to strengthen research on fish nutrition, fry growth, and overall fish productivity at the station.

According to Mr. Ohashi, zooplankton research plays a crucial role in enhancing the survival rate and growth of fish fry, which in turn directly impacts fish production.

His research focuses on identifying suitable plankton species and improving natural feed availability for inland aquaculture systems. However, the transfer of research-based knowledge to younger generations remains a challenge in Nepal.

He has been teaching young researchers during his tenure. "Even though the number of researcher's active engagement is low, I expect each one of them to share their knowledge and disseminate learned information to more potential minds who are interested in this field in the future", he said.

Currently, he is focusing on zooplankton research in four fish species—common carp, grass carp, rohu and naini. He said that although the experiment is being conducted on a small scale, it could be expanded on a larger scale.

His research shows that zooplankton is more effective than micro-feed in promoting the growth and survival of fish, particularly common carp and grass carp. According to the study, fish fed with zooplankton recorded higher growth rates than those given micro-feed. The survival rate was also significantly better when zooplankton was used as the primary feed.

He emphasized that the use of zooplankton can enhance fish health, reduce mortality and improve overall aquaculture productivity. Technical Officer at the Fishery Research Station, Begnas, Guna Bahadur Gurung, said that the senior JICA volunteer involved as many youths as possible to transfer knowledge on fry production and increase fish output.

The infrastructure of the Fishery Research Station was built by JICA with grant assistance in 1991. The station focuses on improving aquaculture, inland water management, and resource conservation while providing technical support to farmers and fishing communities in western Nepal.

It also produces fingerlings for distribution to the fish farmers. These fish seeds produced at Begnas Seed Production Centre have revitalized aquaculture in the Pokhara region's lakes, ponds and paddies, providing income and employment opportunities directly to more than 100,000 households.

Around 400,000 fry of various species—including common carp, grass carp, rohu and naini—are produced annually at the research station. The fry are sold to farmers at prices ranging from Rs. 1 to Rs. 2 per fry.

## DIGITAL LEARNING, EXTRA ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS

Currently, two Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers are supporting educational activities at Shree Ramrekha Basic School in Baglung and Shree Sahara Bal Basic School in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Kaski, focusing on youth activities and digital learning.

Ms. Honoka Tanimoto has been working at Shree Ramrekha Basic School in Baglung, which serves around 130 students from early childhood education to grade 8. The school has 12 teachers and mainly serves students from economically disadvantaged families.

As part of her assignment, Tanimoto conducts practical computer education classes for grades 4 to 8, teaching basic typing skills and applications such as Microsoft Word and Paint.

She also provides learning support during vacant periods at school by organizing drawing and other creative activities. However, the school faces several challenges, including a limited number of functional computers, hardware damage, virus-related issues and a shortage of teaching staff. These constraints have affected the expansion of digital education.

Despite these challenges, her support focuses on strengthening students' digital literacy, developing basic presentation skills and promoting participatory and enjoyable learning methods in the classroom.

Another volunteer, Ms. Anna Tsushima, is teaching at Shree Sahara Bal Basic School in Pokhara Metropolitan City,

Kaski district. The school is located in a low-income area, where around 90 per cent of students come from economically vulnerable households, mainly seasonal laborer families. Some students are unable to receive regular meals at home.



Ms. Tsushima teaches mathematics to Grade 2 students and English to Grade 5 students. When teachers are absent, she also conducts extra activities such as arts, sports and music.

“Many students struggle to understand basic number concepts due to a lack of teaching materials. To address this issue, I created simple number block cards

and introduced hands-on learning using concrete materials,” she said.

English lessons are conducted mainly in English, with support from Nepali teachers when necessary. This approach aims to improve students' listening skills, although challenges remain in vocabulary and grammar acquisition.

Although extra activities are not currently part of the official curriculum, she plans to work with the school principal to introduce them once a week from the new academic year, as these activities allow students to express themselves freely and confidently.

Her goal is to develop a sustainable curriculum framework that can be continued by local teachers in the future.

According to her, she also plans to receive number blocks donated by Komagane City in Japan to strengthen students' understanding of number concepts and to conduct teacher training on the importance of hands-on learning and effective use of concrete teaching materials.

“I plan to improve my questioning techniques to help students to understand lessons more easily. In addition, I aim to increase opportunities for students to actively use English through speaking and output-focused activities,” she said.

## SUPPORTING POST-HARVEST INNOVATION

Likewise, volunteer Ms. Nagisa Kawajiri has been supporting fruit farmers in Syangja by promoting improved cultivation techniques and post-harvest practices suited to local conditions.

Kawajiri, specializing in fruit growing, has been assigned to the Agricultural Section of Putalibazar Municipality, Syangja, from August 2024 to August 2026.

According to her, she provides technical guidance on fruit and vegetable tree plantation, management, post-harvest handling and control measures for citrus greening disease and fruit flies.

Her key activities include disseminating educational videos on mandarin oranges, grapes, shiitake mushrooms and organic insecticides to improve farmers' knowledge and skills.

Kawajiri has also initiated a refrigerated storage experiment for mandarin oranges by utilizing underused refrigerators in the municipality. The project aims to reduce post-harvest losses and extend the sales period.

Previously, attempts to store oranges in refrigerators resulted in complete spoilage, leaving the facilities unused during winter. While traditional earthen and wooden storehouses are well developed in Japan, no successful refrigerated storage practices had been reported locally.

In this region, hand harvesting is common. However, the current experiment includes scissor harvesting to minimize fruit damage, the use of baking soda for its antibacterial properties to help reduce fruit decay, and a comparative evaluation of air circulation and humidity in plastic containers and wooden boxes.



*Ms. Nagisa Kawajiri at the orange farm in Syangja.*

According to her, they picked oranges in November, washed them with baking soda, and stored them in a refrigerator. Around 300 kg of oranges, which were stored using baking soda for its antibacterial properties, have remained safe so far.

Phani Narayan Aryal, proprietor of Triputra Bagwani Farm in Arjunchaupari Rural Municipality-1, Syangja, said that the support and experience shared by a JICA volunteer—from plantation to post-harvest practices—have been useful for farmers in Syangja.

"The technology using baking soda for orange storage is very simple and inexpensive. Based on the current condition of the oranges, we believe it is useful," he said.

If proven effective, the technique could benefit farmers and traders by eliminating the need to sell oranges quickly at low prices during the peak season.

The technology for keeping oranges fresh for a long time is essential for Syangja's farmers and traders, as orange production in the district exceeds Rs. 1.25 billion annually, he added.

## WELCOMING NEW JICA VOLUNTEERS TO NEPAL

On 20 January 2026 JICA Nepal welcomed 2 new JICA volunteers to Nepal.

With fresh energy and diverse expertise, these dedicated individuals are ready to make a meaningful impact across communities throughout the country.

Their arrival marks the beginning of exciting, innovative projects focused on sustainable development and enriching everyday lives. After completing their local language training in Kathmandu, the volunteers will be dispatched to their respective host organizations, where they'll begin their journey alongside Nepali counterparts.

We not only wish for their safety and good health but also hope their time in Nepal fosters deep mutual understanding and strong friendships at the grassroots level.

*This article written by Senior journalist Mr. Laxman Kafle was published in The Rising Nepal Daily on 16 January 2026.*

## 55 YEARS OF JICA VOLUNTEERISM HIGHLIGHTED AT CROSS-NATIONAL VOLUNTEER GATHERING IN NEPAL

Volunteer Sending Agencies (VSA), united by the shared mission of deploying volunteers to Nepal and contributing to the country's development through grassroots-level engagement, have been convening regularly for more than three decades. These meetings have served as an important platform to address challenges in volunteer deployment procedures, exchange security management information, and share updates on volunteer activities and achievements. Through this continued engagement, VSA have fostered a strong spirit of mutual support and collaboration.

In this context, the JICA Nepal Office organized a joint gathering titled "Cross-National Volunteer Synergy: Enhancing Impact in Nepal" on 6 February 2026. The event aimed to bring together not only VSA representatives but also volunteers from different organizations, creating a space to share field experiences, exchange ideas, and discuss common challenges faced during assignments in Nepal, along with practical strategies to overcome them.

The program featured presentations by volunteers from various organizations highlighting their ongoing work in Nepal. In addition, group discussions were facilitated among volunteers with a particular focus on field-based activities and shared learning across sectors.

The event welcomed nearly 100 participants representing a wide range of VSA organizations, including the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Peace Corps, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), as well as representatives from media houses and JICA officials.

Commemorating the occasion, Mr. MATSUZAKI Mizuki, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, remarked: "We witnessed truly engaging and impressive presentations from volunteers representing various organizations today. I was delighted to see the depth of their work and the meaningful efforts they are making to create positive change in Nepal."

Mr. Troy Kofroth, Country Director, Peace Corps on the event stated, "It was a great way to build synergy among the volunteer agencies here in Nepal, and I hope to see a lot of positive collaboration coming out of it."

During his special Remarks by Mr. Mooheon Kong, Country Director, KOICA Nepal, expressed his sincere appreciation to the JICA

Nepal Office for organizing the event, which successfully brought together volunteers from diverse walks of life under one roof. He noted that such a gathering stands as a testament to inclusive and sustainable efforts in Nepal, strengthened by the spirit of solidarity and collaboration among all participating agencies.

Overall, the event successfully strengthened connections among volunteers of diverse nationalities working across Nepal, promoted collaboration among VSAs, and contributed to maximizing the collective impact of volunteer efforts in the country.

On the 55th anniversary of JICA's Volunteer Program in Nepal. As the host organization, JICA shared the history and key milestones of its volunteer engagement with VSA stakeholders.

Founded in 1965, the JICA Volunteer Program enables Japanese volunteers to work alongside local communities, contributing to socioeconomic development through the effective use of their skills and experiences. Volunteers live and work closely with local people in their host communities, allowing them to identify development needs from the grassroots perspective while promoting mutual understanding and friendship between Nepal and Japan.

The first JICA volunteers were dispatched to Nepal in September 1970. Since then, their activities have expanded across a wide range of sectors and sub-sectors, including agriculture, health, education, forestry and fisheries, repair operations, civil engineering, sanitation, sports, as well as planning and administration. The JICA Volunteer Program in Nepal remains committed to sharing knowledge, skills, and technology at the grassroots level through a "Learning by Doing" approach, supporting Nepal's nation-building efforts.



## 4TH JICA CHAIR 2026. INNOVATING MATERNAL AND CHILD CARE: BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR NEPAL'S MCH IMPROVEMENT

JICA Nepal Office, in collaboration with Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM), organized the annual 4th "JICA Chair" on January 29, 2026. This year's discussion centered on the theme of Maternal and Child Health (MCH), bringing together experts to share experiences and best practices for improving health services for mothers and children.

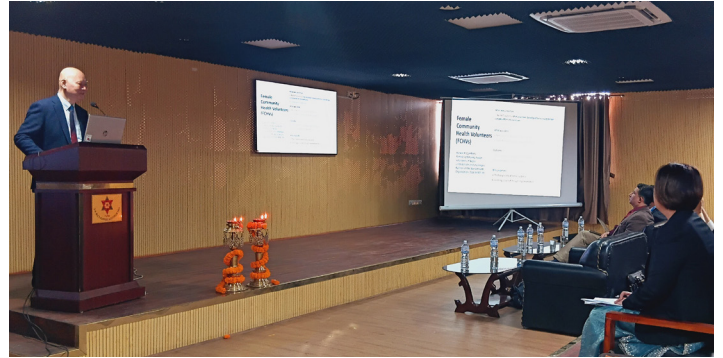
The primary objective of the event was to facilitate meaningful discussions on strengthening maternal and child health services and evidence-based planning—drawing on lessons from Japan, Nepal, and other countries.

The event welcomed nearly 70 participants from diverse institutions, including Tribhuvan University, TUTH, Institute of Medicine (Medicine and Nursing campuses), Kanti Children's Hospital, Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital, Midwifery Society of Nepal, Nepal Nursing Council, Nursing Association of Nepal Counterparts from the MCHHB Project (FWD/DOHS) and the Ministry of Health and Population, local health authorities and JICA officials.

Distinguished professors and specialists from Japan delivered lectures on global and country-specific advancements in maternal and child health:

1. **Prof. Dr. Masamine Jimba**, Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo  
*"Three Decades of Maternal and Child Health in Nepal: Progress, Lessons, and the Road Ahead"*
2. **Dr. Kie Kanda, Chief Advisor**, MCH Handbook Project  
*"Introduction to JICA's on going Technical Cooperation: The Nepal Maternal and Child Health Handbook Project"*
3. **Ms. Keiko Osaki**, Senior Advisor, JICA Human Development Department (Online)  
*Global discussions and case studies on MCH Handbook implementation across countries*
4. Presentation by Nepali academia on maternal and child health research in Nepal: (1). Maternal Health – **Prof. Dr. Kesang Diki Bista**, Head of Department, Obstetrics & Gynecology, TUTH. (2) Child Health – **Prof. Dr. Sudha Basnet**, Head of Department, Pediatrics, TUTH

Following the expert presentations, interactive discussions that highlighted Nepal's unique social, cultural, and geographical considerations crucial to strengthening MCH services were also undertaken. Discussions also emphasized the need for context-



*Prof. Dr. Masamine Jimba, Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo delivering his presentation on "Three Decades of Maternal and Child Health in Nepal: Progress, Lessons, and the Road Ahead"*

specific development models, supportive government policies, and stronger collaboration among stakeholders.

Remarks were delivered by Prof. Dr. Mohan Raj Sharma, Dean of IOM, Prof. Dr. Khem Karki, Assistant Campus Chief, Maharajgunj Medicine Campus and Mr. Mizuki Matsuzaki, Chief Representative, of JICA Nepal.

The discussions connected closely with JICA's ongoing four-year technical cooperation project, launched in mid-April 2025, titled: "Project for Improving Continuum of Care for Mothers and Children through the Utilization of the MCH Handbook."

Implemented jointly with the Ministry of Health and Population, the project aims to introduce an integrated Maternal and Child Health Handbook (MCHHB) and develop an effective model for delivering high quality, continuum MCH services. The project is currently being implemented in Gandaki and Lumbini Provinces and is expected to significantly strengthen maternal and child healthcare nationwide.

This year's JICA Chair marked an important step toward enhancing maternal and child health outcomes in Nepal by fostering dialogue, strengthening partnerships, and promoting knowledge exchange between Nepal and Japan.

### (Reference)

"JICA Chair", also known as the "JICA Program for Japanese Studies," collaborates with universities and academic institutions worldwide to offer lectures to share Japan's development experience history, and policies. The significance of the JICA Chair lies in its role in promoting mutual understanding and academic exchange

between Japan and other countries. It provides a platform for fostering global networks of scholars and practitioners and contributing to solving international challenges through informed perspectives. Over the past three years, the seminar themes have included:

1. Politics in Nepal and Japan: Political Parties and Periodic Elections (2023)
2. Economic Development Policies and Practices in Nepal and Japan (2024)
3. Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal and Japan: Concepts of Public, Mutual, and Self-help (2025)



**Prof. Dr. Masamine Jimba** (center) with Chief Representative of JICA Nepal office **Mr. Matsuzaki Mizuki** (2nd from right) and other keynote speakers of JICA Chair **Prof. Dr. Kesang Diki Bista** (2nd from left), Head of Department, Obstetrics & Gynecology, TUTH, **Prof. Dr. Sudha Basnet** (extreme left), Head of Department, Pediatrics, TUTH and **Dr. Kie Kanda** (extreme right), Chief Advisor, MCH Handbook Project.

## ENSURING MEDIA SECTOR'S SIGNIFICANCE AND NEUTRALITY DURING THE ELECTIONS (2017)

The Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (CDJMC), Tribhuvan University, in partnership with JICA, organized two events in April 2017 to strengthen media roles in Nepal's 2017 local elections that was to be held in May 2017. JICA Nepal in collaboration with Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Tribhuvan University jointly organized a seminar titled 'How elections should be covered in a Democratic Country' in Kathmandu, Sindhuli District and Janakpur, where Media educators and scholars of Nepal and Japan highlighted the need for free, fair and impartial media coverage before, during and after the polls.

Consecutively, 'Dissemination of Balanced News in the Forthcoming Local Level Election and Importance of News' was also held just few days ahead of the local level elections in Nepal.

With Nepal transitioning from years of political instability, balanced and professional election coverage was seen as essential. Despite Nepal having hundreds of media outlets, many are

influenced by political or vested interests, and journalists often lacked adequate training, resources, and skills for effective election reporting. The chief guest of the seminar was then Chief Election Commissioner Hon'ble Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav.

The first event, a seminar with 75 journalists, featured presentations by Nepali and Japanese experts on impartial reporting, broadcast and print media roles, and international experiences in election coverage. A workshop followed, where journalists practiced and created election coverage plans, though many struggled to focus on specific themes—highlighting the need for more structured planning and thematic reporting.

The second event, a focus group with editors, discussed improving internal newsroom policies for fairer, more objective election reporting.

During the event, Dr. Keiichi Hashimoto, senior advisor to JICA, emphasized that biased media coverage can provoke election-related violence. He urged journalists to adopt strict election codes of ethics and strengthen media self regulation

to prevent such risks. He highlighted the importance of maintaining fairness, neutrality, and independence by resisting political influence.

Mr. Takao Kobayashi from NHK Television shared Japan's experience in election coverage and its relevance for Nepal. JICA Chief Representative Mr. Jun Sakuma also stressed the media's crucial role in providing accurate information so that voters can make informed choices. Prof. Chiranjibi Khanal of Tribhuvan University reiterated the need for impartial journalism during elections.

Additionally, Mr. Toshiyuki Sato of Japan's Public Broadcasting Organization highlighted the importance of balanced reporting. NHK representatives demonstrated their fair election coverage methods, while Nepali journalists shared their own experiences and challenges.

Participants emphasized that such trainings enhanced professional capacity, support democratic processes, and help the media better uphold citizens' right to information.

## STRENGTHENING NEPAL'S AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE – HANDOVER OF CHANDRA NAHAR REHABILITATION PROJECT



The well preserved old structures of the Irrigation System.



The rehabilitated irrigation system handover was jointly conducted in honorable presence of the Secretary of Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Ms. Sarita Dawadi.

JICA Nepal proudly announces the successful handover of “The Project for the Rehabilitation of Irrigation System in Eastern Terai Area” at Bhagni Maleth, Saptari district on 28 January 2026. The rehabilitated irrigation system handover ceremony was conducted in honorable presence of Ms. Sarita Dawadi, the Secretary of Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation (MoEWRI), Mr. Yasuharu Shinto, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan to Nepal, and Mr. Mizuki Matsuzaki, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal office.

The Chandra Nahar Irrigation System, completed in 1927, is not only Nepal's first modern irrigation system but also a symbol of the country's agricultural heritage and engineering excellence. For nearly a century, this system has supported thousands of farmers and contributed immensely to food security and rural livelihoods in the Terai region. However, after 95 years of operation, the system faced severe challenges due to aging infrastructure and lack of periodic maintenance.

Responding to the Government of Nepal's request, JICA extended a Grant Aid of JPY 2.256 billion (approx. NPR 2.05 billion) to

rehabilitate this historic system.

- 32 critical structures (8 canal underpass, 9 cross drainage work and 15 canals crossing bridges) have been rehabilitated
- Improved water distribution across 11,000 hectares
- Direct benefit to 35,000 farming households

This project is not only about infrastructure—it is about preserving Nepal's engineering legacy and strengthening the bond between Japan and Nepal. This project carries deep historical significance which began more than a century ago when eight pioneering Nepali students traveled to Japan for higher education in 1902. Among them was Mr. Dilli Jung Thapa, Nepal's first engineer, who studied engineering in Japan and later led the construction of the Chandra Nahar irrigation system. 120 years have passed since this historic educational exchange, and this project stands as a testament to shared history, cooperation, and enduring partnership between the two nations.

“I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Government of Japan

and JICA for their invaluable support, which has not only contributed to preserve this important historical infrastructure but has also ensured the successful rehabilitation of the irrigation system in line with modern engineering standards. In addition to the physical infrastructures, the support provided for human resource development—through knowledge and technology transfer, skill enhancement, and the promotion of a culture of constructing quality infrastructure—has greatly benefited the officials, this project and the surrounding communities. These contributions have made a significant impact on Nepal's agriculture and irrigation sector, strengthening both its productivity and sustainability”, stated Ms. Sarita Dawadi, Secretary, MoEWRI.

Mr. MATSUZAKI in his remarks appreciated for the cooperation and partnership of Government of Nepal, Ministry and other stakeholders to complete this historic project successfully and reaffirmed JICA's commitment to working together with Nepal to support national priorities in agriculture, water resources that contributes to broader socio-economic development.

## JICA HANDWASHING CAMPAIGN: CLEAN HANDS, HAPPY HEARTS



JICA Nepal just wrapped up an exciting month long handwashing campaign across four amazing schools in the Kathmandu Valley—and what an energetic, joy filled journey it was!

On February 2026, JICA Nepal launched the “Clean Hands, Happy Hearts” handwashing campaign across four schools in the Kathmandu Valley, aiming to strengthen hygiene practices and promote better health among young learners. The participating schools included Shree Path Pradarshak Secondary School in Badikhel, Shree Sisneri Secondary School in Lubhu, Shramjit Kishor School in Gwarko, and Hill Side Academy in Jaharsingh Pauwa.

Recognizing that proper hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to prevent infectious diseases, JICA Nepal designed the campaign to instill lifelong healthy habits among schoolchildren. By engaging students at an early age, the initiative hopes to inspire behavior that extends beyond the classroom, influencing families and communities as well.

The campaign introduced fun and interactive learning methods to ensure strong and memorable engagement. Activities included a brief introduction to JICA Nepal's work, educational videos demonstrating the correct handwashing steps, hands-on demonstrations, and a short quiz competition

to reinforce learning. This approach helped cultivate a positive and enjoyable environment where children could learn the importance of hand hygiene in an impactful way.

The campaign reached remarkable participation numbers, engaging over 1,000 students and more than 100 teachers, staff, and parents. The enthusiastic involvement of the schools greatly contributed to the initiative's success, helping students understand and remember the benefits of regular and proper handwashing.

*“I really enjoyed the handwashing session as I got to learn something new and that too for my own health benefit. I will practice the important 8 step process from now onwards as I wash my hands and teach my younger sibling to do the same”,* claims a very excited student from Shree Path Pradarshak Secondary School in Badikhel, Lalitpur.



*“The various sessions on proper handwashing practices, maintaining good hygiene, and adopting routine healthy habits were extremely beneficial for our students. These activities will help the children develop sustainable discipline and understand why cleanliness is essential in their daily lives. Likewise, the quiz segment was thoroughly enjoyed by the students, as it allowed them to learn many new and interesting facts in an engaging way. We hope to continue such meaningful and practical initiatives in our school in the future as well,”* stated Mr. Umesh Mandal, Principal of Shree Sisneri Secondary School, Lubhu.

The “Clean Hands, Happy Hearts” campaign aligns with JICA Nepal's broader commitment to improving public health, supporting social development, and strengthening local partnerships. Through awareness-raising, behavior change promotion, and stakeholder collaboration, the campaign aims to create lasting improvements in hygiene practices. JICA Nepal believes that empowering children with essential health knowledge today will contribute to a healthier, more resilient future for all.



## REBUILDING SCHOOLS, REBUILDING HOPE IN JAJARKOT

After the devastating 2023 Jajarkot earthquake, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is supporting through the reconstruction of schools — the heart of every community and the foundation of every child's future.

Reconstruction of 11 earthquake affected schools in Bheri and Nalgad municipalities is now well underway under the Emergency School Reconstruction Project (ESRP).

Buildings are taking shape, and the school compounds are slowly transforming into safer, stronger, and more resilient learning spaces. During recent site visits, the visible progress — from structural frames to emerging classrooms — reflects the dedication of everyone involved in this rebuilding journey.

These schools will not only replace what was lost but will also deliver improved environments that support better learning outcomes and long-term community strength.

### EMERGENCY SCHOOL RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT (ESRP):

ESRP was launched with an aim to reconstruct schools damaged by 2015 Gorkha Earthquake. Thus, 274 disasters resilient schools were built in six districts Gorkha, Dhading, Nuwakot, Makwanpur, Rasuwa and Lalitpur under the principle of “Build Back Better (BBB)”. These rebuilt schools are designed to serve as regional hubs for improving education quality.



*Damaged structure of Shree Tribhuvan Secondary School ,Bheri Municipality, Jajarkot (2024)*



*The under-construction infrastructure of Shree Tribhuvan Secondary School, Bheri Municipality, Jajarkot (2026)*



*School Students of Masta Basic School, Bheri Municipality, Jajarkot currently studying in their old school building.*



*New structures being built for Masta Basic School, Bheri Municipality, Jajarkot*

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Joint monitoring under the Project for Climate Change Adaptation through Sustainable Forest Management by the federal and Gandaki Province ministries, along with JICA, highlighted successful climate change adaptation efforts through collaboration among District Forest Offices (DFO), Soil Conservation and Watershed Management Offices (SWMO), and Community Forest Users' Groups (CFUGs).

Initiatives such as capacity building for local officials and adoption of techniques like forest fire planning, bioengineering, and soil fertility improvement have started showing promising results. Sustainable forest management (SFM) practices linked to livelihood enhancement, including agroforestry and forest fire control, are becoming evident in Pilot areas.

The monitoring team emphasized the need for expansion and sustainability, agreeing to scale activities to two additional districts. Strong leadership from the Project Director and Provincial Project Secretary was noted throughout the mission, ensuring effective coordination and progress toward climate resilience and community-based forest management.



CASFOM Project together with Kushma Municipality has supported Ek Salle community forest users group for agroforestry initiatives to promote their area as an orange pocket area. (Joint Review Monitoring together with Mayor of Kushma)



SWMO Chief, Parbat, explains how learnings from the project trainings are being utilized in constructing local gabion check dams and bioengineering techniques



Discussion during Joint Monitoring: Monitoring was comprised of Project Director & Joint Secretary of Participatory Forest Division of MOFE (Federal), Project Manager and Under Secretary of Climate Change Division of MOFE (Federal), Project Secretary and Province Project Secretary of MOFE (Gandaki Province), Province Project Manager and Under Secretary of MOFE (Gandaki Province), Senior Representative and team from JICA Nepal office along with DFO and SWMO officials from Syanja, Parbat, Tanahu and JICA Long Term and Short Term Expert team of the TCP

## MY TRIP TO JAPAN: REINFORCEMENT OF METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES, 2025



At the Numerical Prediction Development Center with other participants



Conducting my presentation at the center.

I am writing this article in memory of my unforgettable visit to Japan in 2025. I had the privilege of visiting Japan through a nomination from the Government of Nepal to participate in the *Training on Reinforcement of Meteorological Services* program. This program was supported by the Government of Japan through JICA Knowledge Co-Creation program (KCCP).

In 2025, the program marked its 52nd year of implementation. It has been continuously organized by the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) and JICA with the aim of strengthening meteorological services in participating countries.

Although this was my second visit to Japan, I was extremely excited to participate in this program and to further explore Japan's development and socio-cultural life. This was my first long-term overseas training, lasting almost three months—from September 22 to December 12, 2025—nominated by the Government of Nepal in my more than fourteen years of professional career as a meteorologist. The program was designed not only for technical training but also to expose participants to Japan's natural beauty, lifestyle, and culture.

The training course was a comprehensive package for meteorologists. It covered the entire chain of meteorological services—from observation to data communication and processing. The program also included weather and climate monitoring and forecasting, public weather services, verification, and research activities.

The course began with country report presentations and concluded with action plan presentations. In between, there were numerous technical tours, lecture presentations, hands-on exercises, and practical sessions. The lecturers had unique expertise and excellent presentation skills. They included high-level professionals ranging from former Director Generals to top leaders at JMA. Some lecturers were early-career professionals, yet they were energetic, knowledgeable, and highly enthusiastic. Their passion for teaching made the classes interactive and engaging, turning them into two-way exchanges of ideas rather than one-sided lectures.

During our visit to the Meteorological College, I was amazed by the level of investment and facilities Japan has dedicated to producing future

meteorologists. The disaster simulation experience at the Honjo Disaster Hall—covering earthquakes, smoke and fire, floods, heavy rain, and storms—made me realize the importance of simulation-based training in educating people about disaster preparedness and response.

The technical tours to the Tsukuba Meteorological Research Institute, the Meteorological Instrument Center, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and the Aerological Observatory deeply influenced my understanding of how observation, research, and instrument calibration play vital roles in enhancing meteorological services.

Visits to observation sites such as the Meteorological Satellite Center, radar manufacturing companies, disaster management divisions, and local observatories in Yokohama, Nippon Airways, and the Aviation Weather Center at Haneda Airport were equally fascinating. Observing meteorological measurements from a ship at Odaiba was a first-time and memorable experience for me. I also learned about the important role played by private weather companies in supporting government meteorological services in Japan.

The visit to Sendai was unforgettable. Witnessing the remnants and documentation of the 2011 tsunami damage, along with the remarkable reconstruction efforts, conveyed a powerful message that we can take back to our home country. The visit to the Sendai Regional Headquarters left a lasting impression on all of us.

The traditional way of welcoming participants in Hokkaido was truly memorable. I thoroughly enjoyed the lectures and scenic surroundings at the Hokkaido Broadcasting Center, Sapporo Regional Headquarters, and Sapporo Science Center. Although I come from the Himalayan region, walking through deep snow in Hokkaido was a first-time experience for me. The underground city infrastructure designed to cope with heavy snowfall was particularly impressive.

Beyond technical training, the session on identifying problem trees and developing objective trees introduced me to a new and effective problem-solving approach. During my stay in Japan, I also managed to visit many cultural and recreational sites, including Tokyo Skytree, Tokyo Tower, Asakusa, Enoshima Beach, Kamakura Temple, and the Great Buddha. Experiencing the active volcanic area of Hakone was another highlight. Yoyogi Park, Ueno Park, and Showa Kinen Park were breathtaking, and visiting the Imperial Palace was a unique experience. At the Japan Open-Air

Folk Museum in Kawasaki, I was reminded of my childhood memories.

Traveling on the Shinkansen, domestic flights, local trains, and express services was another remarkable experience. Beyond the Tokyo region, I also visited Nagoya, where I spent quality time with my sister and her family. Visiting the Nagoya Zoo allowed me to see many animals for the first time in my life.

From my stay in Japan, I am returning with valuable memories and practical ideas on how meteorological services can be improved in Nepal. The warm hospitality, respect for others, silence in public transportation, punctuality, and walking culture of Japanese society encouraged me to reflect on and appreciate our own Nepali lifestyle. Japan's ability to achieve development and modernization while preserving natural beauty has left a deep impression on my heart.

I am sincerely grateful to the Government of Japan for providing me with this invaluable opportunity. Special thanks go to my coordinators from JMA (Tsubouchi-san) and JICA (Midori-san), as well as all the members of JMA and JICA Tokyo and JICA Nepal who made this program possible. Special thanks to Sone san for making the things understandable to us as a translator. I am also thankful to my eleven colleagues from ten different countries for giving me

a homely and unforgettable experience in Japan.

The program was designed not only for technical training but also to expose participants to Japan's natural beauty, lifestyle, and culture.

Besides, I was very impressed by Japan's disaster preparedness and response techniques. From my stay in Japan, I am returning with valuable memories and practical ideas on how meteorological services can be improved in Nepal.



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