Half a Century of Cross-Border Collaborations

1965  Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers program inaugurated. Five volunteers sent to Laos.
1966  Kenya becomes the first African country to receive JOCVs.
1968  El Salvador receives JOCVs as the first Central American country to do so.
1972  Western Samoa is the first country in the Oceania region to receive JOCVs.
1978  The first JOCVs in South America go to Paraguay.
1981  JOCVs are dispatched to Thailand, the thirtieth nation to receive volunteers.
1990  JOCV program reaches 10,000 volunteers dispatched; JICA Senior Volunteers program initiated.
1992  Hungary becomes the first Eastern European JOCV recipient.
2000  JOCV program reaches 20,000 volunteers dispatched.
2010  JICA volunteer programs reach a cumulative total of 40,000 volunteers dispatched.
2015  JOCV program celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Volunteers dispatched to 96 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Volunteers</th>
<th>Youth and Senior Volunteers for Nikkei Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>606 (84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>11,858 (2,116)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>8,726 (1,903)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>2,717 (669)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>3,488 (649)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This map includes countries we no longer dispatch.  As of Aug. 2015

PHOTOS: Koji Sato, Takeshi Kuno, Shinichi Kuno, and Ken长相 more.
JICA’s volunteer program is one of Japan’s technical cooperation schemes operated as part of its Official Development Assistance (ODA). The program dispatches eager Japanese citizens who wish to participate in assisting developing countries and also have the adequate skills, knowledge and experience to answer the calls for assistance from their governments.

The program has three objectives:
1. To cooperate in the economic and social development, as well as the reconstruction of developing countries
2. To promote international goodwill and deepen mutual understanding
3. To develop international perspectives and give back the experience to the Japanese community

Since its first dispatch to Laos in 1965, more than 48,000 JICA volunteers have worked alongside local communities in 96 countries and regions. As summarized by the phrase “together with the local community,” JICA volunteers live and work at the grassroots level, speaking the same language as the local communities and carrying out activities with an emphasis on fostering self-reliance for sustainable change. Volunteers are generally dispatched for two-years, in various fields ranging from education, nursing to auto mechanics, IT, and sports.

**Types of Volunteer Program**

**Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs)**
One of the oldest volunteer programs in the world, it was inaugurated in 1965. The program targets those between ages 20 and 39. To date, more than 40,000 Japanese volunteers have been dispatched to 88 countries.

**Senior Volunteers**
The program began in 1990 and targets those between ages 40 and 69. Most participants join the program after retiring from successful careers in Administration, Primary Education, and Vocational Training. To date, over 5,700 people have been dispatched to 73 countries.

**Youth and Senior Volunteers for Nikkei Communities**
Started in 1985, the program sends volunteers to assist in the development of Nikkei (Japanese Descendant) communities in Latin America. Many volunteers cooperate in Japanese Language Education, Vocational Training and Social Welfare Services, while also fostering further understanding of Japanese culture. Since the start of the program, a total of 1,250 people have been dispatched as Youth Volunteers and 450 people as Senior Volunteers for Nikkei communities in nine countries.
Volunteers contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals

Administration / Business / Tourism
Volunteers help facilitate community development using various approaches such as establishing small income-generation projects with local groups to create additional income. Additionally, volunteers with knowledge and experience in public administration work in municipal governments or other organizations to provide better services to its citizens and customers.

Categories
Community Development, Public Administration, Disaster Prevention and Disaster Relief, Statistics, Computer Technology, Marketing, Tourism, and others.

Medical Care / Health Care / Social Welfare
Volunteers work to provide better health care and increased access to information through assisting in skills development of local health care professionals as well as promoting awareness of various health-related issues.

Categories

Education
The activities of volunteers in Education may expand from assisting the learners to improve their scholastic proficiency in various subjects or working with regional educational departments to organize teacher training programs to introduce alternative or new teaching methods.

Categories

Public Works / Utilities
State-of-the-art technologies of Japan are in great demand all over the world. Supervision and advice from volunteers with advanced skills and practical experience help partner institutions to improve the quality and efficiency of their projects.

Categories
Civil Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Architecture, Surveying, Telecommunications, and others.

Agriculture / Forestry / Fisheries
Volunteers contribute to improve productivity, food security, and increase profitability by introducing best practices, management systems and new techniques in each field.

Categories
Food Crops & Rice Culture, Vegetable Growing, Animal Husbandry, Forestry and Afforestation, Aquaculture, and others.

Manufacturing / Energy
Volunteers with upgraded technical skills provide direct supervision and advice to their local counterparts/students in municipal governments of vocational training facilities to help train technicians in each field.

Categories

Japanese Language Education
Volunteers assist to improve Japanese language skills of those who aspire to become Japanese language teachers or seek employment opportunities in areas such as tourism. Volunteers are also dispatched to Nikkei communities in Latin America to teach Japanese language as well as culture to those of Japanese descent.

Categories
Japanese Language Education, Nikkei School Teacher (Japanese Language)

Sports
Many volunteers help coach and train national sports teams of developing countries, but sports can also be utilized to promote better health and social skills for children as well. Volunteers provide technical advice and training know-how to teams and players at all levels.

Categories
Baseball, Judo, Table Tennis, Gymnastics, Water Polo, and others.

Volunteers contribute to improve productivity, food security, and increase profitability by introducing best practices, management systems and new techniques in each field.
Together with the local community

Toward the Future, Side by Side
Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs)

A BRIDGE SPANNING A HALF CENTURY

The first JOCVs, five Japanese youths, landed in Laos in 1965. In the 50 years since their arrival, successive volunteers have preserved the spirit of these pioneers in working closely with local residents, serving as a bridge linking Laos and Japan. An hour north by plane from Vientiane, in the remote province of Oudomxay, is a productivity and marketing center run by the province’s Department of Industry and Commerce. The region was once notorious for its production of opium poppies. Currently, programs are underway to reduce reliance on poppy farming by promoting the production of handicrafts as a means for residents to earn a living. The center plays an important role in this process, overseeing the sale and distribution of finished products.

JOCV member Takahisa Arai uses his sales knowledge to provide the center with ideas as well as other types of support. Inside the center, products like bags, pouches, and shawls made from cotton and other natural fibers are stacked neatly in rows. “Women’s groups from eight different villages make the handicrafts,” explains Arai. “They live in remote mountain villages, subsisting largely on agriculture. These products are an important source of cash income for them.”

After graduating from university, Arai worked at a financial institution, where he helped oversee loans to small and medium-sized businesses. Using experience gained in helping different Japanese enterprises improve their operations, Arai has been influential since coming to Oudomxay in providing a wide variety of plans and ideas. These have included designing displays and point of purchase advertising to explain about a wide variety of plans and ideas. These have included designing displays and point of purchase advertising to explain about products, as well as the creation of promotional posters and leaflets.

MAKING PRODUCTS WITH A LOCAL TOUCH

Traditional raised-floor dwellings stand side by side in the village of Mang, a small community inhabited by the Khmu, one of Laos’s many ethnic groups. Life moves along traditional lines in this highland region, located an hour and a half by car from the center along winding mountain roads. Arai notes that the village women have very impressive skills. In a display of this prowess, a woman deftly uses a knife to split kudzu vines and remove the inner fiber, which she quickly twists into a thimble piece of twine. These light cords, which retain their strength even when wet, are woven into bags. Watching as the Khmu women apply traditional skills passed down over generations, Arai interjects: “This may look easy, but it is very difficult.”

Arai’s role in helping the women of the community to utilize traditional skills in creating handicrafts to sell to tourists.

Previously, Seang and the other women had been weaving kudzu into shoulder bags, but they proved unpopular with tourists because of their size. To address the issue, the women have begun weaving smaller bags and introducing new design aspects, such as creating striped patterns using dyed twine.

Mayphone Silivong, the manager of the center’s promotion and product development section, shares her Japanese colleague’s ambitions for the center. “We hope to create products that have a broad appeal to consumers,” explains Silivong. “Our ultimate goal is to begin exporting them.”

For the women in the village, starting new projects is not always an easy task. According to Arai, it is hard to adequately convey ideas through words alone. “The first thing I do is show an example of what I’m trying to explain,” he says. “After that, I leave it in the hands of the local residents at the center.” The result has been an ongoing effort to create new and original products.

BRINGING WORK SKILLS TO COLOMBIAN YOUTHS

Senior Volunteers participant Shoichi Morita provides instruction in plastic molding techniques to students at a job-training center in Colombia. After a long career developing components for Nissan Motor and Fuji Xerox, Morita applied to the Senior Volunteers program following his retirement. Like many volunteers, he was motivated by a desire to put his years of experience to use in cooperative efforts overseas.

The job-training center is part of a national network of schools run by the Colombian government aimed at providing individuals who have graduated from high school, but are unable to afford college, with the knowledge and training they need to find employment. Students receive 1–2 years of training free of charge in such fields as manufacturing, business and commerce, culinary arts, and nursing. There are around 1 million students enrolled in the program, gaining skills and knowledge that will be valuable in the Colombian economy.

Morita was dispatched to a school in Colombia’s third largest city of Santiago de Cali that provides training in resin application and metalwork. He instructs students in the production of films and tubes, working alongside other teachers at the school to teach four classes of around 25 students each.

One aspect of training that receives especially close attention from Morita is bettering the practical aptitude of his students. When a question comes up in class, he notes, students have a strong tendency to be satisfied with merely knowing the correct response. This can be problematic to their development, however, as it is focusing on the processes behind an answer that leads to broader understanding and true problem-solving skills.

To address this issue, Morita has gradually increased the time students spend in practical training. He feels confident that the experience they gain by applying their hands and minds toward finding solutions will serve them well as they move forward.

Practical training includes instruction in the 5S system, a mindset that for decades has sustained the outstanding safety and efficiency of Japan’s manufacturing industry. Representing the five Japanese words seiri (sort), seiton (set), seiso (shine), seiketsu (standardize), and shitsuke (sustain), the system is intended to instill a high level of professionalism to complement practical skills.