TOHOKU × WORLD
Tohoku, Uniting with the World

Japanese version

English version
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Contents
Page 4 Message from JICA Tohoku
Page 5 Striving Toward “Resilience through Resonance among Diversified Societies”
Page 6 Linkage between Tohoku and the World
Page 8 Steps Forward to and from Tohoku

Former JICA Volunteers
01. MOTOMOCHI Sachiko
02. AKIYAMA Chie, SAITO Hiroki
03. HITACHI Naoko

JICA Partnership Program
04. HATAKEYAMA Makoto (NPO Mori wa Umi no Koibito)
05. TSURUOKA Shintaro (Higashimatsushima Organization for Progress and Economy, Education, Energy)
06. KAWAGUCHI Takahumi (Reconstruction Policy Division, Higashimatsushima City)
07. HATAKEYAMA Makoto (NPO Mori wa Umi no Koibito)
08. TSURUOKA Shintaro (Higashimatsushima Organization for Progress and Economy, Education, Energy)
09. KAWAGUCHI Takahumi (Reconstruction Policy Division, Higashimatsushima City)
10. SHIMADA Masayuki (Familiar Co., Ltd.)

Development Education Study Tour for Teachers
07. OTSUKI Takahiro

JICA Volunteers
08. YASHIMA Yumi

Training Programs
09. Corazon Tecson JIMENEZ
10. Tomy Mulia HASAN
11. Humberto Enrique MARIN URIBE
12. Nuchada CHAROENPANICH
13. Khalil MOUSSAOUI
14. Ghislain Sedote DEGLA

ODA and JICA, The role of JICA Tohoku

JICA Tohoku Programs

JICA Tohoku Information
Message from JICA Tohoku

Any country including Japan cannot prosper by itself without helping each other to overcome the current difficulties faced by the world.

We, JICA Tohoku, have accepted a number of technical cooperation trainees from various developing countries every year, and have worked together with regional partners such as local governments to provide numerous training programs to share their historically accumulated technologies, know-how and social mechanisms with the trainees. In return, the trainees also contributed toward bringing revitalization to the Tohoku area by providing regional people with a boost of encouragement and stimulation.

We are also able to recognize the mutual learning opportunities in the total of 3,417 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) and Senior Volunteers from Tohoku (as of January, 2015), and in the growing number of grass root level JICA partnership programs in Asia and Africa.

In the JICA partnership programs, Tohoku communities affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE) and facing depopulation and aging problems are making efforts to create a new society by mutually learning with developing countries beyond national boundaries.

In the course of reconstruction from GEJE, we realized that there is need for us to reevaluate our sense of value. Although people of developing countries have different cultural backgrounds, this might be the time for us to redesign our society by learning and working with such people, since they possess a set of practical skill that can overcome various difficulties of life.

Each region must rediscover its available resource and use their respective uniqueness to achieve a sustainable development. JICA Tohoku would like to continue to contribute toward the global effort in realizing a society that allows for various enrichment of life.

March 2015

Director General,
Tohoku Branch Office, JICA
HANYA Ryozo

Striving Toward “Resilience through Resonance among Diversified Societies”

The world including Tohoku is comprised of various local regions where each region possesses a distinctive feature in terms of people, culture, tradition, value system, nature, disaster, etc. We can share knowledge and perspective to acquire clues for creating a new society when interacting with other likewise unique people with different value systems.

We believe that real resilience against various risks such as disasters, recessions, disputes and climate change can be collectively achieved when respective regions autonomously proceed toward inclusive societies that mobilize the full potential of the people.
Tohoku ʷ  World

Units with the World

Total number of projects:
Private Sector Partnership
and JICA Partnership Program

The regions that have accepted JOVs
from Tohoku

Linkage between Tohoku and the World

Asia: 1,068

India 21
Indonesia 73
Uzbekistan 15
Cambodia 50
Kyrgyzstan 19
Sri Lanka 85
Thailand 56
Tajikistan 1
Nepal 107
Pakistan 8
Bangladesh 114
Philippines 144
Bhutan 39

Africa: 1,012

Uganda 52
Ethiopia 53
Gabon 4
Côte d’Ivoire 11
Djibouti 9
Zimbabwe 38
Sudan 2
Senegal 67
Tanzania 123

Namibia 8
Niger 36
Burundi 1
Madagascar 11
Mozambique 14
Liberia 18
Rwanda 17
South Africa 7

Latin America: 773

Argentina 17
Uruguay 15
El Salvador 43
Guyana 3
Guatemala 46
Costa Rica 35
Colombia 30
Jamaica 22
Saint Vincent 5
Saint Lucia 7
Chile 21
Dominica 2

Dominican Republic 57
Nicaragua 31
Paraguay 118
Brazil 40
Venezuela 12
Belize 3
Peru 22
Bolivia 68
Honduras 85
Mexico 26

Oceania: 280

Kiribati 3
Samoa 45
Solomon Islands 32
Tonga 35
Vanuatu 23
Papua New Guinea 45
Palau 19
Fiji 33
Marshall Islands 19
Micronesia 26

Middle East: 238

Yemen 5
Egypt 19
Syria 46
Tunisia 37
Morocco 90
Jordan 41

Europe: 46

Serbia 1
Turkey 6
Hungary 7
Bulgaria 16
Poland 9
Romania 7

Total Number of JOVs Dispatched from Tohoku: 3,417

Statistical data as of January 31, 2015
A great number of people from Tohoku have worked with JICA engaged in technical cooperation programs. At the same time, plenty of people from overseas have also visited Tohoku to participate in JICA programs.

Although you may feel like you are far away from activities related to volunteers or developing countries, people who have been involved in JICA programs may actually be nearer than you think. They can be volunteers sent to Africa or Latin America. Or they can be corporations, non-profit organizations (NPOs) or local governments who work together in Asian countries. They can also be trainees who have visited disaster affected areas in Tohoku from the Middle East.

We looked into people who have become active in Tohoku and/or in the world being driven by their experience of working on JICA Tohoku programs. The following show their “First Steps” and “Present and Future” with JICA.
MOTOMOCI Sachiko

Secretary General of the NPO “Tsudoi” (meaning “gathering”). As a JOCV, she was engaged in a project that promoted the social participation of persons with disabilities in Costa Rica. She is currently focusing on enhancing the revitalization of the local community of Otsuchi Town, Iwate Prefecture. I decided to participate in JOCV with the aim to create a society where people can live their lives naturally for themselves. Through the volunteer activity, I faced various problems, and because there was not any single solution to tackle them, I had to come up with ideas that can correspond depending on individual situations. This philosophy gained from Costa Rica turned out to be something that is equally useful in the revitalization of the local community in the post-earthquake disaster reconstruction. When considering the past four years in Otsuchi Town after GEJE, what is required at this stage is the spontaneous initiatives of the local residents. Through the activity of NPO Tsudoi, I am placing values on those local initiatives while I am taking a background role. I would like to devote myself to continue to do what I can do in the hope of creating my hometown Otsuchi to be a better place to live for all, regardless of having disabilities or not.

AKIYAMA Chie, SAITO Hiroki

AKIYAMA: A very visible challenge in Miyato district is the declining birthrate coupled with the aging population. I am hoping to support the residents who are proud to live in this area to retain an environment where they can be fully motivated and enjoy themselves. For example, we can make our community restaurant “Genchan House” into a PR hub to showcase the cuisine of Miyato women which has great richness in variety and taste.

SAITO: In Nobiru, there are people who are relocating to higher ground and those who are remaining in the same place regardless of disaster damage. Since these people have different needs, the reconstruction process is progressing in different ways. Such situations could easily incur a gap in information about reconstruction progress between the two parties. To solve the problems, I am supporting the publication of “Nobiru Reconstruction Newspaper” in the hope of promoting the smooth formation of a new community. In addition, we have added a new column to the newspaper on the history of Nobiru. Sometimes local people do not know much about their own. I would like to make use of my viewpoint as an outsider, to disseminate what to appreciate about Nobiru for future generations.

AKIYAMA Chie

AKIYAMA: I am participating in JOCV and engaged in rice cultivation instruction in Rwanda. She is currently focusing on community formation at temporary housing sites in Miyato district. As a JOCV, she was engaged in a project that promoted the social participation of persons with disabilities in Costa Rica. She is currently focusing on enhancing the revitalization of the local community of Otsuchi Town, Iwate Prefecture. I decided to participate in JOCV with the aim to create a society where people can live their lives naturally for themselves. Through the volunteer activity, I faced various problems, and because there was not any single solution to tackle them, I had to come up with ideas that can correspond depending on individual situations. This philosophy gained from Costa Rica turned out to be something that is equally useful in the revitalization of the local community in the post-earthquake disaster reconstruction. When considering the past four years in Otsuchi Town after GEJE, what is required at this stage is the spontaneous initiatives of the local residents. Through the activity of NPO Tsudoi, I am placing values on those local initiatives while I am taking a background role. I would like to devote myself to continue to do what I can do in the hope of creating my hometown Otsuchi to be a better place to live for all, regardless of having disabilities or not.

HITACHI Naoko

A member of Kamaishi Regional Coordinators’ Council “Kamaentai” of Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture. She participated in JOCV and was engaged in the improvement of the lives of women and children in a fishing village in Senegal. After returning to Japan, she has started to work on reconstruction support in her hometown, Kamaishi.

The earthquake struck two weeks before I was to leave for Senegal. I thought deeply about whether I should go or not, but I finally decided to go and was determined to contribute to my hometown after two years in Senegal. We always have to provide careful assistance for local residents so that they can sustain what they have attained even after the assistance ends. Keeping this in mind, I endeavoured to “report, contact and consult” and made sure that I worked not just with one person but with multiple people. I am currently working on community formation at temporary housing sites in my hometown, Kamaishi City. I am also organizing activities that show photographs to convey the lessons learned from the disaster and feelings about the disaster to future generations. As I have learned in overseas volunteering, the important thing in reconstruction is to create a mechanism with initiatives involving local people to sustain the effects of assistance even after it ends.

HATAKEYAMA Makoto

Vice president of the NPO “Mori wa Umi no Koibito” which has its origin in a forestation by fishermen in Kesennuma, Miyagi Prefecture. He has been actively engaged in activities such as environmental conservation, environmental education, forest and community building. He is working on “the Environmental Awareness-Raising project for Symbiosis between Forests, Human and the Ocean” in the Philippines through the JICA Partnership Program.

In the Philippines, there is a difference in awareness of the environment between people engaged in primary industries and those engaged in secondary and tertiary industries. It is not effective to provide them with the same education program, but we need to approach each group differently depending on their livelihood. In that sense, I am placing importance on nurturing people who have a well-balanced perspective in terms of the environmental protection and livelihood improvement.

There is a possibility that the fishing industry may not be able to sustain itself due to changes in the natural environment. Therefore, it is necessary to switch to an amalgamation of primary, secondary and tertiary industries, which is called “sixth-order industrialization” in Japan. We are currently constructing a café that will sell freshly-caught seafood and processed goods in our activity site in Kesennuma. And we are also planning eco-tourism programs. People do not just come to oyster farms but they do come to cafés – the important thing is the creation of a “sustainable” framework. In both Kesennuma and the Philippines, a common ideal is “the more we protect nature, the more affluent we can live.”
A Senior Volunteer for Japanese Communities Overseas

YASHIMA Yumi

A Senior Volunteer for Japanese Communities Overseas currently engaged in Brazil. She is working as a nursing care assistant in the elderly nursing home “Beneficiência Nipo-Brasileira São Paulo Casa de Repouso-Santos Kosei Home” where most of the residents are the first and second generation of Japanese immigrants. Over 90% of residents at “Beneficiência Nipo-Brasileira São Paulo Casa de Repouso-Santos Kosei Home” are the first and second generation of Japanese immigrants. Having an opportunity to work under such environment has helped me to realize how important to carry a conversation in ones’ mother language. I remember witnessing a scene that an elderly resident who only had a short remaining time to live was having a hard time finishing a meal, and the nurse was telling her in Portuguese “you must eat”. I cannot forget her response saying “it is hard to be talked in Portuguese in such a time”. Based on this experience, I intentionally talk with them in their mother language, whether in Japanese or my poor Portuguese. Coming to Brazil has made me be aware of such issues, and I believe providing these kinds of help will make a tremendous amount of contribution toward their peace-of-mind.
Disaster reconstruction process contains useful clues for the community building in developing countries. With the purpose of introducing useful reconstruction challenges to the developing countries and connecting them with the disaster affected areas, JICA Tohoku has accepted 2,948 trainees from 111 countries by January, 2015. Among such training programs, “Case Studies on Disaster Reconstruction Process from the GEJE” that has been implemented since FY2012, is introducing inspiring reconstruction challenges. We interviewed those trainees what they learned in Tohoku and how they are utilizing them in their countries.

Under the training program, JICA is inviting people from developing countries and providing them with opportunities to learn technology and knowledge in Japan. Most of the trainees are already engaged in positions taking a central role in social and economic affairs of their respective countries, and they are contributing to the development of their countries making use of what they learned in Japan. We interviewed trainees who participated in "Medical Equipment Maintenance" at Medisun Co., Ltd in Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture.

In Morocco, there is overwhelmingly little training on medical equipment compared to training for medical doctors. My mission is to disseminate knowledge about the medical equipment to the people who are in need. During this training, I was able to visit a manufacturing factory and was able to directly question engineers about Japanese-made equipment actually being used in Morocco. I was able to further my technical knowledge through this experience, which could not be attained in other countries. In addition, many people in Morocco are willing to visit Japan to learn from Japanese who are known for their diligence and hard work. Thus, we are able to learn the advantage of Japan through the training program as well. This is extremely significant both for me and for Morocco.

Along with expertise on medical equipment, I learned the importance of fulfilling 5Ss which are composed of Seiri (Sorting), Seiton (Setting-in-Order), Seiso (Shining), Seiketsu (Standardizing) and Shitsuke (Gaining the Discipline). It is important to maintain adherence to such standard over and over on a daily basis. Although we cannot start the full scale 5Ss in Benin, we can put into practice little by little starting with the 2Ss which are Seiri and Seiton. By introducing the 5Ss concept, the behaviors of my colleagues have started to change in terms of cleanliness and punctuality. I would personally like to incorporate this into my family as well. On top of that, I became interested in the way that Japanese people work as a team and how they stick to the deadlines. It is my hope that I can continuously help out people and contribute toward world peace through connecting with Japan.
JICA, as the executing agency of Japanese ODA (Official Development Assistance), is working with developing countries to solve the current global issues that we face. JICA’s assistance is conducted in various ways to make optimal use of rich human resources and experience of Japan.

The concept behind ODA includes not only humanitarian assistance but also “otagaisama” (mutuality) and “okagesama” (gratitude). In particular, since Japan relies on imports for much of its natural resources and food, our dependence on other countries is very high. Japan can attain its own benefits through ODA in contributing to global stability and peace by supporting the further development of developing countries.

The Tohoku region, which has a rich and sometimes harsh natural environment, has fostered great wisdom over long years in co-existence with nature in industries and livelihoods such as farming, fishing, forestry and mining. In addition to this wisdom, after the GEJE, there are a number of regions where vigorous reconstruction is in progress. Making use of the characteristics, strengths, wisdom, technologies, people and culture of Tohoku, we are working to solve issues both in developing countries and in Tohoku. The people of the world meet “Tohoku”, and the knowledge of Tohoku spreads throughout the “world”. JICA Tohoku hopes to be the point of contact between Tohoku and the world.

**ODA and JICA**

JICA Tohoku Programs

**Group and region/country-focused training**

Acceptance of Trainees is one of JICA’s technical cooperation programs. It implements training in Japan for administrators and technicians from developing countries. There is “group training” and “region/country-focused training”, and the training courses make use of the rich knowledge and experience of Tohoku in industries and livelihoods such as agriculture and mining.

**Training program for young leaders**

This is also one of JICA’s technical cooperation programs inviting young leaders from developing countries who will be responsible for future nation building. In Japan, these young leaders are given basic training in their field of expertise to improve knowledge and awareness for future nation building.

**Great East Japan Earthquake reconstruction assistance**

While valuing the connection and trust that has been nurtured in Tohoku up until now, JICA Tohoku supports initiatives for even better reconstruction of the affected area utilizing its experience of overseas reconstruction assistance, human resources and global networks.

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**Private sector partnership**

We are aiming to solve development issues in developing countries and revitalize Japan’s regional economy by promoting excellent products and technologies from small and medium-sized enterprises in Tohoku. A variety of support programs to facilitate overseas operation are available depending on plan maturity.

**JICA partnership program**

JICA supports and jointly implements cooperation projects for developing countries based on the experience and technology accumulated by NGOs, local governments and universities. These projects are implemented in order to directly benefit the lives of local residents in developing countries.

**Volunteers**

There are two types of volunteers: JOCV and Senior Volunteers. They are dispatched as government volunteers who want to contribute in developing countries based on their individual knowledge and expertise. 2015 is the 50th anniversary of JOCV. Up to the present, 3,417 people from Tohoku have participated (as of 31st January, 2015).

**Development education support**

Development education cultivates knowledge of the various issues surrounding development and their connection with our lives, and encourages us to consider what we can do ourselves in order to solve these issues. We provide opportunities to the children, students and citizens of Tohoku to take another look at the current situation in developing countries and Japan through Development Education Study Tour for Teachers and visiting classes, etc.
Tohoku = World

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JICA Plaza Tohoku
JICA Plaza Tohoku shares a plaza at its entrance which is open to the public with books and pamphlets related to developing countries and international cooperation. Public lectures and events also call the public interest and the Plaza aims to be a crossing point between Tohoku and world.
Open hours: Weekdays 9:30–17:30

Public event
JICAfe Tohoku
JICA Plaza Tohoku changes into a small lounge for international understandings whenever we have guest speakers JICA training participants from overseas, ex-JICA volunteers who spent their wonderful 2 years in their assigned countries and our staff journeyed back from various missions. Local coffees are often being served to visitors in this “café” like atmosphere.

Photo gallery
We host exhibitions of photos on people, activities, culture of various countries taken by JICA volunteers and experts to promote people’s interest toward international cooperation.
Publisher: Japan International Cooperation Agency: JICA Tohoku Branch
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