



Special Issue University Partnerships

Producing Future Leaders

Universities are important places to foster international cooperation. Partnerships between universities and JICA are bringing benefits to both developing nations and Japan.



Learning Together in Japan

Universities are collaborating with a lot of international cooperation activities carried out by JICA. Universities host scholars from developing nations, and draw on their specialized knowledge to further research into these nations.

The program hosted by the Graduate School of Engineering, the University of Tokyo, “Water Engineering and Utility Management for Future Leaders,” started in September 2018. In its first year, four students from waterworks agencies and government ministries supervising water supply in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos came to Japan. These students have several years of experience in the field and are candidates for future executive positions back home. As Professor Takizawa, an expert in water supply engineering at the Graduate School of Engineering noted, “We gave them research topics that were directly connected with improving management. The scholars would carry out surveys back home, and then analyze the collected data together with Japanese graduate students to find solutions in Japan. The conclusions can then be verified on the ground in their home countries, allowing the scholars to bring back proof of concept for their ideas.”

For example, a student who worked in the Water and Hygiene Bureau of the Yangon City Development

Committee (YCDC) in Myanmar researched the reduction of non-revenue water* in pipes, and verified that replacing broken water meters would increase the revenue. Around 80% of water meters in Yangon are broken, so YCDC collects water charges based on a fixed-rate fee. “As a result, the water bills are the same for both a big mansion and a tiny house, which isn’t fair,” the student felt. So, on a trial basis, water meters were replaced in one region and the water charges were collected based on the actual consumption. This showed that the increased revenue would offset the cost of replacing water meters after about eight months, after which it would be possible to generate stable revenue.

“Why wasn’t such a simple system introduced earlier?” They say that a second pair of eyes sees things more clearly. When you’re put in a different environment to your normal workplace, discussing things with graduate students and professors, you learn to see things from an objective, long-term perspective,” says Professor Takizawa.

The Synergistic Effects of Collaboration

Professor Takizawa says, “There are many advantages of collaborating with universities. For example, in the case of scholars’ projects, the scholars can work with Japanese advisors and students to come up with solutions to research problems during the two-

University Links Create Benefits for Both Developing Nations and Japan



Mutual Learning Leads the World

Former scholars who studied in Japan are playing active roles as leaders in their home countries, and at a regional and global level.



Ahead, Together

The experience and knowledge obtained through joint research between universities in Japan and research institutions or universities in developing nations is the driving force behind improving research levels at Japanese universities and developing internationalist perspectives for students.



Rooted in the Local

Long-standing cooperation between universities in developing nations and Japan builds deep-rooted relationships of trust. An essential ingredient when fostering new solutions to the challenges we face collectively.

year study and put them into practice. In some cases, experimental demonstrations can be carried out during implementation of JICA projects.” The budget for replacing the water meters in the Yangon proof-of-concept test mentioned above was covered as part of the JICA scholar program. Developing nations have deep trust in JICA’s track record of international cooperation. Synergistically, in addition to budgetary support, universities appreciate that JICA’s presence enables scholars to obtain cooperation for research and demonstration in their own countries.

Professor Takizawa adds some encouraging words: “I would like these JICA scholars to hone their skills for organizing data, thinking logically, and seeing the true nature of the issue, and master the ability to apply them to help solve problems in their own countries. After they return, I expect they will be able to become officials capable of identifying new issues, and proposing and carrying out solutions.”

Also of benefit is the opportunity for Japanese students to understand the current realities of developing nations from the scholars’ research, and learn about diversity.

“In addition, it is beneficial to Japan if international researchers can share the Japanese way of thinking and working in their home countries. This will increase the number of people who better understand Japan and the Japanese people. This will not only be positive for international cooperation, but also benefit Japanese people working in developing countries. Moreover, the number of local leaders who understand, trust and support Japan and the Japanese people will increase.”

Having a diverse range of links between JICA and universities, such as programs to host scholars, or survey and research collaboration, will deepen the bonds with developing nations and encourage the mutual development of both Japan and these other nations.



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