

7 Take Advantage of Young People in Building Futures for Developing Countries

—Dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers—



A JOCV kindergarten teacher working in Romania.

Objectives of the Program and Its History

Dispatches to 78 Countries

The Dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) Program assists and promotes the overseas activities of young people who wish to cooperate in the economic and social development of developing countries in response to requests from developing countries.

JOCVs generally spend two years in developing countries, living and working with the local people while taking part in cooperative activities. Furthermore, the experience also benefits the volunteers themselves as they strive to overcome the various difficulties they face in their personal relations and work.

Cooperation is provided in seven fields: agriculture, forestry and fisheries, processing, maintenance, civil engineering, health and hygiene, education and culture, and sport. Around 140 occupations are involved in all.

The Dispatch of JOCV Program began in 1965 with the dispatch of the first batch of 26 volunteers to four countries: four to Cambodia, five to Laos, five to Malaysia, and 12 to the Philippines.

In fiscal 2002, the dispatch of volunteers to South Africa, Madagascar, and Venezuela began, and Mozambique concluded a JOCV dispatch agreement with Japan. In fiscal 2003, dispatch of volunteers to Dominica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in addition to Mozambique is planned. These additions mean that, as of the end of March 2003, 78 countries had exchanged notes concerning the dispatch of JOCVs with Japan. The government of Japan is trying to exchange notes concerning the dispatch of JOCVs with Benin and Gabon in the future.

In fiscal 2002, 1,234 volunteers from first to third groups were newly dispatched to various destinations. As of the end of March 2003, 2,315 volunteers were deployed in 66 coun-

tries, making a total of 24,219 since the program's inception.

The number of female volunteers has increased in recent years: at the end of March 2003, 53% of active JOCVs were women. The portion of JOCVs that is made up of women has risen to 37% since the program began.

Volunteers are generally sent abroad for two years, but demand has grown for a one-year term dispatch. This is because of the difficulties encountered by JOCVs in resuming their employment after returning to Japan and of restrictions placed by companies on the length of time that employees can take off to engage in voluntary work. A one-year dispatch system was therefore instituted in fiscal 1997.

On the basis of requests from the United Nations, the JOCV Secretariat also sends experienced individuals to serve as United Nations volunteers. At the end of March 2003, there were 30 active United Nations volunteers from Japan, making a total of 212 to date.

The JOCV Secretariat administers the following activities to promote the program.

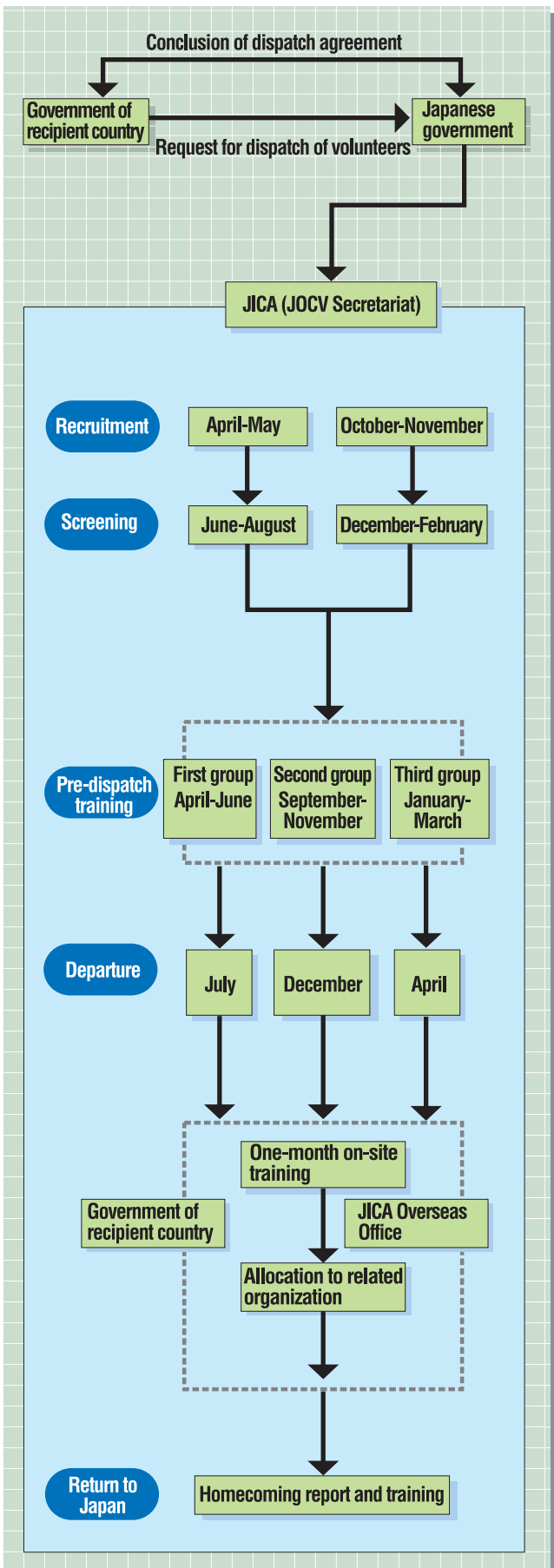
Steps from Recruitment to Dispatch

1. Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

Volunteers are recruited twice a year, in spring and fall, with the cooperation of local government bodies and private organizations throughout Japan. In the spring 2002 recruitment campaign, explanatory sessions at 238 venues nationwide were attended by 12,369 people, of whom 4,614 applied. In the fall campaign, sessions at 229 venues were attended by 10,179 people, of whom 4,821 applied.

The selection process includes primary and secondary screenings: the former including written examinations in English, technical skills, and aptitude as well as an examination of the candidate's medical history, and the latter comprising

Figure 3-10 The JOCV Dispatch System



technical and personal interviews and a medical check-up.

There were 600 successful candidates in the spring and 605 in the fall of fiscal 2002.

2. Pre-dispatch Training

Successful applicants undergo around 80 days of camp-in pre-dispatch training as probationary volunteers. The aim of this training is to improve their ability to adapt to life and work at their postings. The main courses in the program are:

- 1) The conceptual basis of JOCV activities, cross-cultural understanding, etc.;
- 2) Politics, economy, history, etc., of host countries;
- 3) Language training; (Courses are provided in around 22 languages including English, French, Spanish, Nepali, and Swahili.)
- 4) Health, hygiene and immunizations;
- 5) Safety management; and
- 6) Physical and outdoor training.

Training is held three times a year at the JOCV Hiroo Training and Study Centre in Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, the Nihonmatsu Training Centre in Fukushima Prefecture, and the Komagane Training Centre in Nagano Prefecture.

3. Supplementary Technical Training to Address Needs

A supplementary technical training system has been established as outlined below to improve the practical skills needed for cooperative activities and to ensure that volunteers can answer the needs of developing countries. Altogether 570 people took part in fiscal 2002, receiving training lasting between several days and nine months as necessary.

1) Training in request-specific skills

Training is provided for volunteers who passed the second screening process with adequate technical skills but require supplementary training in line with specific requests. This training is also given to JOCVs on temporary home leave after extension of their period of service in cases where additional technical training is deemed necessary.

2) Training in practical skills

Training is provided for volunteers who passed the second screening process with adequate basic technical knowledge but who possess insufficient practical skills.

Backup Support for Volunteer Activities

1. Technical Instructor (Advisor) System

To make JOCV cooperation more effective, a technical advisor system employing experts in various disciplines gives

volunteers technical assistance and ensures that the requests presented by developing countries are closely examined. It also ensures that the specialized technical abilities of applicants are accurately assessed during the recruitment and selection processes.

2. Managing Volunteers' Health

The following unified health care is provided at the JICA Medical Support Center, which is under the supervision of the Human Resources Assignment Department, with the help of advisory doctors that include a supervising physician, doctors with expertise in infectious diseases, psychologists, and gynecologists.

- 1) Physical examinations, evaluations, and immunizations are carried out from pre-dispatch training to repatriation.
- 2) Advice and guidance are provided to dispatched volunteers who suffer accidents or illness.
- 3) Advice and guidance are provided to the office in the event that a dispatched volunteer becomes seriously ill.

In addition, health care consultations, medical institution referrals, and emergency response for volunteers are carried out by entrusting them to local advisory medical doctors and posting health administrators when necessary.

3. Injury Compensation

Compensation and disbursement for medical treatment and transportation are available if a volunteer dies, falls ill, or is injured at any time from the start of pre-dispatch training until return to Japan at the end of overseas service.

4. Career Guidance for Returning Volunteers

Many volunteers give up their previous jobs or join immediately after leaving school. To assist them with their careers once they are back in Japan, counselors at the JOCV Secretariat and JICA agencies in Japan are on hand to give advice, provide employment information, and explore future career possibilities.

Of the 1,240 volunteers who returned in fiscal 2001, 1,126 had decided on their careers by the end of the fiscal 2002: 240 returned to their previous jobs, 502 took up employment (including self-employment), 141 decided to continue their studies, and 243 got part-time jobs, married, etc.

Related Promotional Activities

In addition to the above activities involving dispatch of volunteers, the JOCV Secretariat is engaged in various other activities aimed at promoting the program.

1. Increasing Understanding of the Program

The following activities aim to increase understanding of JOCV activities among the general public, to attract more volunteers and to provide a forum for the exchange of information with others active in the same field.

- 1) Preparation of informative literature on the program, etc.
- 2) Issue of the monthly magazine *Crossroads*
- 3) Twice monthly issue of *JOCV NEWS*
- 4) Channeling of information to the mass media and cooperation with media coverage
- 5) Backup program dispatch

This system involves the dispatch of ordinary volunteers for one month to provide temporary support for JOCV on active service. For example, a serving teacher is dispatched to support a volunteer teacher when special courses or seminars are being conducted; or, when a volunteer is performing a certain study, another volunteer can be dispatched to support that study.

2. Job Retention Scheme

Many people abandon the idea of joining the JOCV or join only after resigning from their previous employment because their employers cannot guarantee them reemployment once their period of service is over. JICA has therefore been actively approaching economic and labor organizations and private companies to persuade them to allow employees serving as volunteers to retain their employment status.

JICA has made provision for paying some of the personnel expenses and miscellaneous costs incurred by employers in this connection to reduce the burden placed on them.

Likewise, there are cases where public school teachers hoping to join the JOCV were not approved by their schools or school boards, despite having passed the selection tests. In order to allow such teachers to participate, a new participation system for incumbent teachers was established in fiscal 2001.

This system is designed to attract incumbent teachers to respond to increasing demand for competent human resources in the educational field. In this system, boards of education run by the local governments that employ teachers who wish to join JOCV recommend these teachers to the JOCV Secretariat through Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). These teachers are not subject to primary screenings by JICA. Local governments will make special arrangements in personnel rotation to allow successful individual applicants to undergo pre-dispatch training from April to June. They are then dispatched in July for a period that ends in March two years later. They are reinstated to their

jobs after April. In fiscal 2002, 63 serving teachers were dispatched in this scheme. In fiscal 2003, 57 volunteers are slated for dispatch.

3. Cooperation with Related Organizations

1) The Supporting Organization of JOCV

The organization that was formed by private benefactors in 1976 to support the Dispatch of JOCV program carries out advertising, career support for volunteers after their return to Japan, and promotion of development education. The organization also aims to expand the regional network of support organizations: 34 local support organizations have so far been formed in 32 prefectures and two cities.

As well as collaborating with the organization, JICA provides materials and sends lecturers to events and study sessions held by youth groups and organizations such as the Japan Senior High School Association for International Educational Research.

2) Japan Overseas Cooperative Association (JOCA)

This association was established in 1983 to support and encourage the activities of returning volunteers. Returning volunteers use their experiences to support the Dispatch of JOCV Program, through personnel support and participation in various events for volunteer recruitment and selection.

3) Linkage with groups of returning volunteers

Groups of returning volunteers have been formed throughout Japan, according to prefecture of origin, type of work, and country of dispatch. They are now cooperating with education projects to promote international understanding and with foreign exchange projects implemented by local governments. Prefectural groups of returning volunteers are assisting JICA with recruitment and enhancing awareness of the Dispatch of JOCV Program.



A JOCV science and math teacher working in Micronesia

4) Cooperation with local government

Assistance from local government is very important when carrying out the Dispatch of JOCV Program. Regular meetings are held with representatives of local government departments responsible for volunteer activities. Officials are also given the chance to observe the activities of the Dispatch of JOCV Program. Such measures enhance understanding of the Dispatch of JOCV Program and strengthen cooperation with local government.

The JOCV Secretariat recommends counterparts* for JOCVs in connection with the technical training in Japan of overseas participants provided by local government. Such training is carried out through either subsidies for organizations engaged in overseas technical cooperation (local government subsidies) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or independent sources of funding. In fiscal 2002, 60 people from 27 countries participated in technical training in various specialized fields for about 10 months under the auspices of 25 local governments.

5) Cooperation with other organizations

Opinions are exchanged with economic and labor organizations in connection with the job retention scheme and corporate and institutional involvement in volunteer work.

Other Volunteer Activities

The JOCV Secretariat also dispatches Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers, Senior Cooperation Experts for Overseas Japanese Communities, and Senior Volunteers.

The Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers and Senior Cooperation Experts for Overseas Japanese Communities Programs are aimed at ethnic Japanese communities in Latin America. Ethnic Japanese are contributing significantly to nation-building in their respective countries and Japanese volunteers are being sent to assist in the development of ethnic Japanese communities.

The Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteer Program began in fiscal 1985 as the Overseas Development Youth Dispatch Program, which supports Japanese young people who want to migrate to South America. Over time and based on the changing needs of overseas Japanese communities, the activities and name of the program was changed and it became a volunteer program under the auspices of the JOCV Secretariat in 1996. As of the end of March 2003, 118 volunteers were at work in seven countries, primarily in the educational and cultural sectors. A total of 768 volunteers have

been sent overseas since the inception of the program.

Projects involving the Senior Volunteers and the Senior Cooperation Experts for Overseas Japanese Communities Programs began in fiscal 1990 and were transferred to the JOCV Secretariat in fiscal 1996. At the end of March 2003, 685 Senior Volunteers and 45 Senior Cooperation Experts for Overseas Japanese Communities were active in 46 and six countries respectively. The total numbers of volunteers dispatched since these programs began have reached 1,281 and 232, respectively.

Public Participation Volunteer Activities

The ODA budget has been seriously affected by Japan's prolonged economic downturn. The Japanese public has high expectations and regard for the Dispatch of JOCV Program as

a pioneer in "aid with a clearly visible profile." Reflecting this, the budget for the Dispatch of JOCV Program in fiscal 2002 was 22.8 billion yen, an increase of 7.6% over that of the previous year.

In response to these evaluations and expectations, a research study titled 'Volunteer Activities for the 21st Century' was conducted in 2001 and 2002 with 11 experts as discussion members. In the study, JICA presented a new policy for volunteer activities and made proposals on how to realize it.

Under the Law of Independent Administrative Institutions regarding International Organizations, the Senior Volunteer Program and JICA Partnership Program were categorized as programs to assist 'public participatory cooperation activities' as a nation, elevating it to the same level as the JOCV Program both in name and fact.

Front Line

● Syria JOVC Group Dispatch in the Field of Preschool Education A More Effective Cooperation System

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

Seminar for teachers

For the purpose of improving preschool education, two JOCVs, one a nursing teacher and the other a kindergarten teacher, were dispatched to Syria in 1996 as a pair.

One of the major achievements of this dispatch was that the nursing teacher and the kindergarten teacher held a seminar for local teachers in Hama City in February 2003. The purpose of this seminar was to train local teachers with no knowledge of methods of enhancing creativity of preschool children to make more effective preschool education. Another aim was to develop and disseminate teaching materials and toys to develop the abilities of preschool children. Origami (paper folding), widely used in Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools, exercise to the rhythm of music, and toy-making with newspapers and recycled paper cartons were all introduced at this seminar.

This seminar provided a good opportunity for Syrian teachers to reflect on their attitudes and perceptions about preschool education, and to give serious reconsideration to preschool education.

Merit of group dispatch

As a result of changing the dispatch method of JOCVs from individual to group dispatch, opportunities arose for volunteers in the same occupation to jointly organize events such as seminars and training and to jointly develop new materials during their assignments. Impressions at their assigned locations became stronger, as well. Volunteers could exchange information with one



A JOCV in preschool education in Syria

another, recognize issues in each assigned location from a different perspective, and obtain tips on how to solve problems.

This cooperation project was very effective in making the best use of group dispatch, and future progress is expected.

(JICA Syria Office)

The new law's purpose is to promote broad-based voluntary participation for each class of citizen in international cooperation activities. Making the best use of such aims, the JOCV Secretariat reviews the aforementioned two programs

as "one system under one policy," examining their treatments and cooperation methods, so Japanese citizens, participants, and recipient countries can easily understand the volunteer activities.

Front Line

● Dominican Republic Dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in the Medical Care Field Strengthening Local Health Care Services

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

Impressive performance of nurse volunteer

JICA has been implementing the project for Strengthening Local Health Care Services in Samana Province, a peninsula protruding into the Atlantic located in the northeastern part of Dominican Republic. In this region, whale watching is a popular tourist activity from January to March and beautiful beaches attract tourists. However, there are villages with no phone lines in the mountains.

JICA's cooperation in the medical care field for this province started with the dispatch of JOCVs in 1991. A total of six nurse volunteers have been dispatched to work on improving the skills of nurses in regional hospitals. In 2001, a JICA expert with experience in strengthening regional health care organizations and services was assigned to the Ministry of Health. The expert selected Samana Province, where an operational base for JOCVs is located, as a model area, and started to work on the revitalization of clinics.

Partly because of the activities of dispatched JOCVs, nursing techniques at hospitals have gradually improved. Future tasks include providing health

care services to patients who do not come to hospitals and people in remote areas who cannot come to hospitals, and promoting alliances between clinics and hospitals. Ever since the provision of five compound vaccines started with grant aid cooperation, JICA plans to strengthen the capabilities of clinics through efforts in improving the immunization rate.

Receiving a prize at a clinic contest

Four nurse volunteers are currently in service in this province. Having their bases at a clinic, they ensure thorough vaccine management and provide explanations to residents about the immunization in cooperation with the expert. At the end of 2002, a clinic where one of the volunteers worked received a high-ranking prize at a clinic contest held by OPS (emergency medical care study group) and neighboring clinics also placed high. This shows that the activities of the volunteers have taken root



Nurse volunteers working in Samana Province

and attracted the attention of other nurses to their efforts.

Furthermore, volunteers now summarize the process of their educational activities with videos taken at various lectures, and so on. This video will be used not only in Samana Province, but also country-wide.

JICA strives to further strengthen regional health care services by implementing training in Japan to develop human resources for regional health care and dispatching short-term experts for community participatory seminars that are not limited to the ongoing dispatch of JOCVs.

(JICA Dominican Republic Office)