Human Resources Development, Citizen Participation and Regional Internationalization

The Youth Invitation Program is part of JICA’s support for personnel training. Young people under the age of 35 from developing countries who will lead nation-building in the future are invited to Japan to train in their fields of specialization and interact with Japanese people. Since the program was started in 1984, it has gradually spread to include Asia, Oceania, Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. In fiscal 2003, 1,625 young people from 110 countries took part in the program, and more than 26,000 have visited Japan since its inception.

Developing Human Resources through International Exchange

Young people are invited in groups on the basis of prior classification in line with their specialization, such as education, economics, regional development, administration, and agriculture and forestry. For example, in the field of education,
training includes lectures related to education, visit to education-related sites and opinion exchange with Japanese teachers.

The Youth Invitation Program aims not only to enable participants to increase their knowledge in their fields of specialization but also to foster a better understanding of Japan and Japanese people, including such aspects as culture and history. One of the main features of the program is a balance between training and exchange.

Among the ingredients of the program is a course of Japanese language study in which Japanese volunteers show participants around the areas they are staying while teaching them practical Japanese; in-house seminars at which participants and young Japanese spend a number of days and nights together to engage in discussions and exchange activities; and homestay programs in local areas. These programs are appreciated by the young people invited.

Contribute to Regional Internationalization

The Youth Invitation Program was undertaken by organizations in 41 Japanese prefectures in fiscal 2003. The number of Japanese citizens who have been involved with the invited participants is around 300,000. These activities allow the Japanese participants to experience international cooperation and exchange, contributing to heightened international awareness in the regions. Opportunities to visit schools also help promote education for global understanding.

Alumni Activities and Expanding Renewed Exchange

In each member country of the ASEAN, young people who have participated in the program have formed alumni associations to carry out vital activities such as exchange projects with Japanese participants and interactions among participants.

In order to continue interacting even after the completion of the program, study groups are dispatched for the purpose of promoting post-exchange. There are cases in which the participants of the Youth Invitation Program became members of the National Diet, local assembly members, university professors, high-ranking government officials, or executives of private companies.

In February 2004, the 20th Anniversary Event of the Youth Invitation Program was held and the achievement made so far was confirmed. Japanese people who had been involved in the program, including members of ASEAN alumni association, former participants, and accepting bodies, were invited to the event. We will further promote public participation in this program in the future.