Objectives of the Program and its History

Dispatches to 80 Developing Countries

The Dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) Program assists and promotes in response to requests from developing countries the overseas activities of young people who wish to cooperate in the economic and social development of 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 2003, the dispatch of volunteers to Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Mozambique, and Venezuela began, and Benin and Gabon concluded a JOCV dispatch agreement with Japan. These additions mean that, as of the end of March 2004, 80 countries had exchanged notes concerning the dispatch of JOCVs with Japan.

In fiscal 2003, 1,310 volunteers were newly dispatched to various destinations. As of the end of March 2004, 2,331 volunteers were deployed in 69 countries, making a total of 25,184 since the program’s inception.

The number of female volunteers has increased in recent years: at the end of March 2004, 53% of active JOCVs were women. The portion of JOCVs that is made up of women has risen to 38% since the program began.

Volunteers are generally sent abroad for two years, but a one-year dispatch system of volunteers called general short-term volunteers was instituted in fiscal 1997.

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 governments and private organizations throughout Japan. In the 2003 spring recruitment campaign, explanatory sessions at 215 venues nationwide were attended by 10,440 people, of whom 4,611 applied. In the fall campaign, sessions at 196 venues were attended by 9,430 people, of whom 5,230 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 technical and group interviews and a medical checkup.

There were 718 successful candidates in the spring and 621 in the fall of fiscal 2003.

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 recipient 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.

3. Supplementary Technical Training

Supplementary technical training is provided to improve...
the practical skills needed for cooperative activities and to
ensure that volunteers can answer the needs of developing
countries. Altogether 747 people took part in fiscal 2003,
receiving training lasting between several days and eight
months as necessary.
1) Training in request-specific skills
   Training is provided for volunteers who possess adequate
technical skills but require supplementary technical training in
line with specific requests.
2) Training in practical skills
   Training is provided for volunteers who possess adequate
basic technical knowledge but lack practical skills.
   Additional training is provided for the type of work that
requires knowledge of the current situation and basic data in
the field of activities in the recipient country for the purpose of
carrying out cooperation activities.

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
technical assistance and consultation to volunteers. It also
ensures that the specialized technical abilities of applicants
are accurately assessed during the recruitment and selection
processes.

2. Dispatch of Backup Program
   This system involves the dispatch of volunteers for about
one month to provide temporary support for JOCV on active
service. For example, an in-service teacher is dispatched to
support a volunteer teacher when special seminars or classes
are being conducted.

3. Managing Volunteers’ Health
   The following unified health care is provided at the JICA
Medical Support Center, with the help of over 20 advisory
doctors.
   1) Physical examinations and evaluations, as well as immu-
nizations, are carried out from pre-dispatch training to
repatriation.
   2) Advice and guidance are provided to dispatched volun-
teers 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.

4. 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.

5. Career Guidance for Returning Volunteers
   Many volunteers give up their previous jobs or join imme-
diately after finishing school. To assist them with their careers
once they are back in Japan, counselors at the JOCV
Secretariat and JICA domestic offices in Japan are on hand to
give advice, provide employment information, and explore
future career possibilities.
   Of the 1,209 volunteers who returned in fiscal 2002, 1,126
had decided on careers, including returning to their previous
jobs, taking up employment, or returning to school, by the
end of fiscal 2003.

Related Promotional Activities

In addition to the above activities involving dispatch of
volunteers, the JOCV Secretariat is engaged in various other
activities to promote 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 informa-
tion 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 coopera-
tion with media coverage

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 local governments, economic and labor organizations, and private companies to persuade them to allow employees serving as volunteers while retaining their employment status.

JICA has made provision for paying some of the personnel expenses and miscellaneous costs incurred in this connection to reduce the burden placed on employers who allow their employees to serve as volunteers.

In addition, a participation system for in-service teachers that was established in fiscal 2001 is designed to attract in-service teachers to respond to increasing demand for competent human resources in the educational field. In fiscal 2003, 56 serving teachers were dispatched in this scheme. In fiscal 2004, 63 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 public relations, 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.

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. These groups of returning volunteers are assisting JICA with recruitment and enhancing awareness of the Dispatch of JOCV Program.

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

Ancient civilization discovered by Father Le Paige

A JOCV is working at an archaeological museum in the village of San Pedro de Atacama, the second province in Chile. San Pedro de Atacama is located on the border with Bolivia and Argentina in the northern part of the Atacama Desert, where an ethnic group called Atacamenos live. The village is located at an altitude of 2,436m, surrounded by desert, and the Salt Lake of Atacama is located south of the village. Owing to the implementation of a Chilean tourism policy in the latter half of the 1980s, many tourists come to visit the village.

The archaeological museum that belongs to Catolica del Norte University in the port city of Antofagasta in the northern part of Chile was founded by a Jesuit missionary, Gustavo Le Paige (1903 - 1980). He was not an archaeologist, but after he came to the village in 1954 as a clergyman and found archaeological relics by chance, he started research into the origins of Atacamenos.

Through his archaeological research, Father Le Paige asserted that Atacamenos once had a civilization and culture equal to those in Mesopotamia and Egypt and tried to revitalize the village through archaelogy. He built the foundation of the museum in 1957, followed by renovations in 1963, and worked to hold international conferences on archaeology.

Full-scale arrangements of relics

Though Father Le Paige carried out a great deal of archaeological research, he died before he finished arranging all the discovered relics. Management of the museum and arrangement and research of the collected relics were taken over by succeeding researchers. The exhibitions in the museum were renewed in 1981 and have not changed since. However, the arrangement of relics, which forms the basis of archaeological research, did not start fully until 2002, when an expert in preserving cultural properties was invited from Santiago, the capital of Chile. The dispatch of the JOCV in the field of cultural property protection was also a reflection of the background of the museum. The activities of the JOCV involve assisting the expert in cultural property protection with relics arrangement.

Recently an expert in museum exhibition and an anthropologist have been invited from Santiago and the UK, respectively. They aim to make a better museum.

(JICA Chile Office)
4) Cooperation with local governments

Assistance from local governments 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 JOCV activities in the field. Such measures enhance understanding of the Dispatch of JOCV Program and strengthen cooperation with local governments.

**Other Volunteer Activities**

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

These 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.

At the end of March 2004, 100 Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers were at work in eight countries, making a total of 814 volunteers dispatched since the inception of the program, and 45 Senior Volunteers for Overseas Japanese Communities were active in seven countries, making a total of 256 volunteers likewise.

JICA also has a program to dispatch former volunteers as UN volunteers. As of the end of March 2004, 24 UN volunteers are in service, and 225 people had been dispatched in total.

**Future Activities**

JICA’s volunteer programs are highly regarded by recipient counties as beneficial programs that directly help at the grass-roots level. While a severe environment for ODA budgets continues due to prolonged economic stagnation, public expectation for and evaluation of the volunteer programs are rising as a core scheme of public participatory international cooperation and the budget for the JOCV Program in fiscal 2003 increased to 23.4 billion yen, 2.6% up from the previous fiscal year.

To guarantee positive evaluations for volunteer programs in the future, program operation that responds more appropriately to needs from inside and outside is necessary. Also the volunteer programs must be utilized for the strategies of whole JICA operations.

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**Hiroo Pre-dispatch Training**

**Attempt at Community-making by Probationary Volunteers**

Applicants who successfully pass JOCV screening tests undergo about 80 days of pre-dispatch training as probationary volunteers. This camp-in training aims to transfer the conceptual basis of international cooperation, cross-cultural understanding, an ability to adapt to different cultures, language proficiency, and other knowledge required for JOCV activities. The tight schedule is programmed from jogging at 6:30 in the morning to lights out at 23:00 for every day except for Sunday. The participants tend to do the best they can to follow the training menus, resulting in a passive attitude. At the same time group living may contribute to regression.

To minimize these negative impacts and promote high motivation and initiative in the training course, probationary volunteers work on community creation throughout the course at the Hiroo Training Center. Immediately after checking into the center, probationary volunteers take roles necessary to go through the training course and organize groups. Each group selects a leader and determines rules and their implementing methods to manage their lives at the center on their own.

**Developing human relationships**

Since people who have never met before entering the center must live together, things may not go smoothly at the beginning. They start by discovering differences among themselves and then try to understand those differences instead of ignoring them. It may take many discussions and repeated trial-and-error until they find things in common. They learn to respect one another’s opinions, and consequently a training community with a high sense of purpose starts to form. Probationary volunteers are expected to experience and confirm the process of developing human relationships while living together in groups.

(Hiroo Training Center)