Outline of Volunteer Program

JICA’s volunteer programs are highly regarded by recipient countries as programs that directly benefit communities. At the same time, while a severe environment for ODA budgets continues, public expectation for and evaluation of the volunteer programs are rising as a core scheme of public participatory international cooperation.

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV)

In response to requests from developing countries, the Dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) Program promotes the activities of young people who wish to cooperate in the economic and social development of those countries. JOCVs generally stay in developing countries for two years, living and working with the local people while taking part in cooperative activities. In 2005, the short-term dispatch system was introduced to correspond to the needs of developing countries in a detailed manner and offer more participation options.

Cooperation is provided in seven fields: agriculture, forestry and fishery, manufacturing, maintenance and operation, civil engineering and architecture, health and welfare, education and information services, and sports. Around 140 occupations are involved in all. Since the program’s inception in 1965, a total of 28,360 volunteers have been dispatched.

Volunteers are deployed to 76 countries, after the addition of Namibia and rejoining of Rwanda and India in fiscal 2005.

Senior Volunteers

The Senior Volunteer Program is aimed specifically at middle-aged people who have a strong interest in cooperation activities in developing countries. This program was preceded by the Senior Cooperation Expert Dispatch Program, which commenced in 1990, and the name was changed to the Senior Volunteer Program in 1996. Under this program, volunteers with extensive skills and plentiful professional experience between the ages of 40 and 69 are recruited. The recruits are then dispatched to developing countries in accordance with requests received from the governments of those countries. The program can be described as a senior version of the JOCV Program.

Cooperation is provided in various fields as in the JOCV Program. The number of dispatched volunteers has drastically increased, from 87 in fiscal 1999 to 405 in fiscal 2005, and a total of 2,685 volunteers have been dispatched since the program’s inception. Senior volunteers were active in as many as 56 countries in fiscal 2005.

Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers and Senior Volunteers for Overseas Japanese Communities

Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers and Senior Volunteers for Overseas Japanese Communities Programs are dispatched in response to requests from Japanese immigrant communities in Latin America, in order to contribute to the development of those communities. Volunteers can be dispatched to nine countries in the programs, and since the inception of the programs in 1985, 891 Youth Volunteers and 298 Senior Volunteers for Overseas Japanese Communities have been dispatched in total.

Outline of Volunteer Program

Recruitment

Volunteers are recruited twice a year, in spring and fall (volunteers for overseas Japanese communities are recruited once a year). JICA discloses the information about requirements on its website and holds explanatory sessions throughout the country. The selection process consists of document screenings and interviews.

In fiscal 2005, 13,538 people attended the explanatory sessions of the JOCV Program and 1,367 out of 7,301 applicants were accepted. With respect to Senior Volunteers, 8,155 attended the explanatory sessions and 392 out of 1,352 applicants were accepted.
Pre-dispatch Training

Successful applicants undergo training prior to dispatch. The training lasts for approximately 70 days for JOCVs and about 30 days for senior volunteers, and the training for volunteers for overseas Japanese communities follows each of them. Language training is at the heart of the training programs, and other components of the programs include the conceptual basis of international cooperation, cross-cultural understanding, history, and culture of the recipient country, health, and hygiene, and safety management.

Volunteers’ Activities and JICA’s Support

Volunteers begin their activities after making a plan with the host organizations based on the requests from the developing countries. Their activities are carried out while they adjust to their situations. In addition, as special efforts, the sector and assignment situations. In addition, as special efforts, the sector and assignment of dispatched volunteers are carefully chosen so that their activities in coordination with JICA’s other cooperation projects can contribute to the social and economic development of the recipient countries.

JICA assists volunteers with their living and housing expenses, as well as activity and equipment costs. In terms of health management, JICA’s advisory doctors and local health administrators are in place to conduct physical checkups and consultation. In terms of safety, JICA provides necessary support such as provision of safety information and securing of an emergency communications system.

JICA promotes the contribution of returned volunteers’ experience in international cooperation to society and, at the same time, particularly supports JOCVs in their career development after returning home. Moreover, JICA actively encourages corporations and local governments to consider the time their employees and staff participate in volunteer activities as administrative leave.

Evaluation of Volunteer Programs

Full-scale evaluation of volunteer programs was introduced in fiscal 2004, according to the systematic volunteer project evaluation method that was formulated in fiscal 2003. In fiscal 2005, a questionnaire survey was undertaken targeting volunteers, recipient agencies, beneficiaries, families of volunteers, associates of volunteers, and returned volunteers, and the results were compiled and analyzed. The results obtained by January 2006 are listed as an interim report on JICA’s website.

40-Year History of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

Highly Appreciated by the People of Recipient Countries

Fruitful 40 years with the people of recipient countries

Forty years have passed since the first five members of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) left Haneda International Airport on December 24, 1965. Since then, more than 28,000 volunteers have been dispatched to 76 countries. Even children of the volunteers have followed in the footsteps of their parents. In fiscal 1965 when the JOCV Program commenced, the number of volunteers dispatched was a mere 40. The number increased every year since then and exceeded 1,000 in fiscal 1993. In recent years more than 2,000 volunteers are always working abroad at any moment. Initially, the activities were dominated by agriculture and civil engineering, as volunteers were called “well diggers.” But today, many volunteers are also dispatched to areas such as welfare, education, culture, and sports.

Young volunteers who have lived and worked with the people of recipient countries during their two-year assignment have been highly appreciated by local people and remain in their memories long after the volunteers left. Enough history has been accumulated to such an extent that partners and students of initial volunteer members are now in leading positions, working with newly received volunteers to develop the next generation of human resources who will play a leading role in their own countries.

Furthermore, the dispatch of JOCVs leaves volunteers with rewarding experiences. Living in a foreign country with a challenging task to achieve goals in a disciplined manner becomes an intangible asset and a valuable experience that cannot be gained in Japan. These experiences are brought back home to be shared with Japan’s society through classroom lessons and various events, expanding the horizon of international cooperation.

JOCV Program celebrates 40th anniversary

On October 29, 2005, a grand ceremony to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the JOCV Program was held in Tokyo with the attendance of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, as well as the Prime Minister and other governmental officials. Former JOCVs who have built this history got together to reflect on the long history of the program, and JOCV candidates undergoing training joined the group to renew their determination toward further development of the JOCVs.

40th anniversary ceremony held at NHK Hall, Tokyo, with the attendance of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress