



A marketing seminar being taught by a Japanese expert (Japan Center in Mongolia)

# Japan Center and the JICA-Net Project

## Japan Center

The Japan Center commenced operations in September 2000 as a base for developing human resources in the private sector of countries with so-called “transitioning economies,” such as those of the Indochina region and the former Soviet Union. Currently, there are nine centers located and operated throughout eight countries (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh in Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz, and Ukraine). Each center focuses on the basic activities of providing “business programs,” “programs for promoting mutual understanding,” and “Japanese-language courses” to the general public, and each functions as “a widely available center for citizens.”

In these countries, the cultivation of human resources to handle actual economic activities is a pressing issue. The center’s business programs develop human resources for that purpose. The courses’ practical content, which includes lectures on Japanese-style management, case studies, and factory analyses, receives high evaluations from local corporations and the business community. Moreover, there have even been cases where former participants have individually spread Japanese-style management by establishing “Kaizen (Improvement) Associations.” Projects to promote mutual understanding include the provision of information on Japan and information about studying in Japan, and exchanges between students from Japan and the partner country through various events and through use of the Internet. Japanese-language courses are conducted through a partnership with the Japan Foundation, and classes ranging from beginner level to expert level have been established in line with the circumstances of each country. These classes also contribute to expanding opportunities to work at Japanese corporations or study in Japan. Furthermore, these classes serve as an important base for Japanese-language education, as support is provided to the Nihongo-kyoushi Organization.

Moreover, JICA is working to produce synergistic effects by linking these separate activities to one another (business Japanese, Japanese classes and orientations for students planning to study in Japan, etc.).

Some centers have already celebrated eight years since their establishment and, as they become better known, are becoming firmly established as a point of contact for people in those countries to learn about Japan. In order to further strengthen that function, JICA is promoting partnerships and cooperation with Japanese Government bodies, local governments, educational institutions such as universities, and private corporations.

Moreover, the locations serve as “widely available centers” even for the Japanese that have relationships with those countries.

## JICA-Net

The JICA-Net project focuses on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of JICA’s activities that utilize IT. This is a new form of international cooperation that makes use of various information communication technologies to surpass the restrictions of time and distance and to complement JICA technical cooperation projects.

Since the project’s start in 2002, it has accumulated content – such as multimedia-based learning materials created and distance lectures and seminars conducted – and expanded its video conferencing network to overseas offices. Accordingly, as the project’s results have gained recognition, more and more people are taking advantage of it. The project has developed such content as “Try it! Environmental Education for Harmony with Nature,” multimedia-based learning material that visualizes examples from Japan in an easily understandable manner and enhances the effects of technical cooperation, and the “Introduction to Instructional Design Overview and Case Studies,” a distance lecture/seminar that was delivered from Japan to increase project effectiveness by introducing educational technology methods to project stakeholders in partner countries. In addition, the video conferencing network, which initially commenced in only three countries, has currently expanded to 64 and is being jointly utilized by such external organizations as the World Bank.

JICA plans to further expand the JICA-Net project as a tool that can be utilized in diverse areas of international cooperation, including for forming, implementing, and conducting follow-ups on technical cooperation projects as well as for creating programs.