



A JOCV provides guidance in rice cultivation (Uganda).

Implementation System: Cooperation Modality

# Volunteer Programs

“Work to Change the World, and Yourself”  
International Cooperation Led by Citizens

JICA's volunteer programs support activities by citizens who wish to cooperate in economic and social development as well as reconstruction in response to requests from developing regions. Participating volunteers can contribute to these causes while also gaining valuable experience from each of the international goodwill, mutual understanding, and international outlook expansion perspectives.

Volunteer programs that continue to attract the highest praise from the Japanese people for being at the core of international cooperation include: the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV), the Senior Volunteer, the *Nikkei* (Japanese descendant) Communities Volunteer, and short-term volunteer programs. Each program is tailored to suit the age and experience levels of its participants.

## Overview of Volunteer Programs Together with the Local Community JOCVs

Recruitment campaigns target people aged between 20 and 39, with the areas of cooperation spanning eight sectors and a diverse range of about 120 sub-sectors, including agriculture, forestry and fisheries, fabrication, repair operations, civil engineering, sanitation, education and culture, sports as well as planning and administration. In fiscal 2008, a total of 1,365 people were sent overseas, with a cumulative total to date of 32,742 people dispatched to 87 countries.

In principle, JOCVs stay in developing countries for a period of two years\*. The basic stance of JOCV activities is concentrated in the phrase “together with the local community.” Cooperation activities develop as JOCVs live and work together with the communities in the country to which they were sent, speak their language, and promote self-help while fostering mutual understanding.

\* In addition to the regular volunteer dispatch period of two years (long-term volunteers), short-term volunteers can be recruited and dispatched for periods of less than one year in response to local requests.

## Utilizing Wide-Ranging Technical and Career Experience Senior Volunteers

Recruitment targets people aged between 40 and 69, reaching people who have a strong desire to engage in cooperation activities in various areas, bringing their long years of practical experience in work knowledge, technology, or interests to developing countries.

Areas of cooperation span nine different sectors, including agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, health and medical care, and human resources (education, culture, sports, etc.). The number of people sent abroad has grown from 87 people in the first year, fiscal 1999, to 433 people in fiscal 2008. To date, a total of 3,808 people have been dispatched to 62 countries.

The average age of senior volunteers is 58. Many of the people recruited in recent years have been people looking for something more worthwhile to do in their post-retirement “second life.”

## Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers and Senior Volunteers Contribute to the Development of *Nikkei* Communities

The *Nikkei* Communities Volunteer Program dispatches volunteers to Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and other Latin American countries in response to requests from the *Nikkei* communities in those countries. Since the start of the program in 1985, a total of 968 people have been dispatched overseas as Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers, and 358 people as Senior Volunteers.

The Special Program for school teachers\*, which was previously open only to JOCVs, has been open to Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers for *Nikkei* communities since fiscal 2008. Returned volunteers are also expected to make contributions to multi-cultural coexistence activities, targeting children of *Nikkei* communities now resident in Japan.

\* The Special Program for school teachers recruits people who are currently serving as teachers in public schools and schools affiliated with national universities to participate in JICA's volunteer program and study local culture and language while retaining their current employment status.

## Volunteer Recruitment, Selection and Training, and Support for Returned Volunteers Recruitment and Selection

Volunteer recruitment takes place twice a year, in spring and autumn (*Nikkei* community volunteers are recruited only once a year, in autumn). Recruitment information is provided on the JICA website as well as at more than 500 explanatory recruitment meetings held every year throughout Japan. Selection criteria include health, technical and linguistic skills, etc., determined by document submissions and personal interviews. In addition, short-term volunteer recruitment and selection takes place six times each year.

## Training and Study before Dispatch

Volunteers take training and study courses before being dispatched overseas. These courses focus on language studies in the language of the target host country and also include studies on the principles of international cooperation, on understanding of different cultures, on the history and culture of the host country, and on health management and safety measures.

## Support for Returned Volunteers

Currently in Japan, there are high expectations placed on returned volunteers. Returned volunteers are expected



A senior volunteer performs road management.

to engage in local Japanese society, administrative, education or corporate activities, and are thought to possess the attributes necessary to be readily accepted into and pursue dialogue with diverse cultures and societies. Providing proof positive of these expectations, a growing number of local government authorities and boards of education have introduced special employment quotas for returned volunteers. The number of programs had reached 25 (18 boards of education and seven local government authorities) as of the end of March 2009.

JICA has developed a support program for helping volunteers make use of the experience gained in their host countries after returning home to

Japan. Specifically, these include 1) career path training, 2) career path pioneering seminars, 3) career-boosting and step-up support, 4) positioning of career path consultation counselors, 5) provision of career path information, and 6) support for furthering a career in the field of international cooperation.

Moreover, many of JICA's returned volunteers are engaging in efforts to help resolve various problems, which Japanese society now faces, by offering their expertise in child-rearing support, revitalization of Japanese communities and other issues. JICA is now trying to highlight these volunteer programs as important tools not only for their contributions to developing countries, but also for making Japan a better place.



A former JOCV member describes the richness of the region to children who will bear responsibility for the next generation.



A former JOCV member and trainees from Indonesia work to develop Indonesian agriculture and to revitalize Japan's farming communities.

### Example

#### The Special Program for School Teachers Also Open to Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers for *Nikkei* Communities

##### Human Resources Who Can Promote Multicultural Coexistence at Educational Sites

The Special Program for school teachers, which was previously open only to JOCVs, has been offered to Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers for *Nikkei* communities since fiscal 2008.

At the present time, there are more than 2.6 million people of Japanese descent living in Central and South America. Since 1996, JICA has been dispatching volunteers to these *Nikkei* communities, to support efforts for their economic and social development. In the intervening period, JICA has also promoted grassroots friendship efforts to foster close, direct contacts with the people of these *Nikkei* communities and to deepen mutual understanding.

Meanwhile, economic globalization has resulted in a sharp increase in the numbers of overseas Japanese residing in Japan. In particular,

children in these communities are attending local schools all over Japan and need teachers who can operate from the perspective of "multicultural coexistence" as well as understand each child's language and way of life. In addition, hands-on experience with education cooperation in developing countries is expected to improve skills in handling teacher issues, as well as guidance skills. Against this backdrop, the decision was taken to establish a program for dispatching currently serving teachers as Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers for *Nikkei* communities.

After returning to Japan, these teachers will be expected to apply their overseas education experiences to schools with large numbers of Japanese-descent Brazilians or other non-Japanese nationals and to contribute to local "multicultural coexistence." The program has already gotten off to a good start. The first teachers to have been dispatched on short-term missions to primary schools in Brazil as Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers for *Nikkei* communities are saying that they can "now understand just a little what it feels like for these Brazilian children struggling with the Japanese language."



A former Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteer for *Nikkei* communities teaches Japanese to Japanese-Brazilian children.