 Volunteers take 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

* 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

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
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.

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 his 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.”