

Support for Japanese Emigrants and Their Descendants

Focusing on Human Development and Welfare for the Aged

Evolving Issues and Challenges Weighing on *Nikkei* Communities and Japanese Emigrants

There are currently more than 2.9 million Japanese emigrants and their descendants (*Nikkei*) living around the world, with the majority living in North, Central and South America. Japanese emigrants and *Nikkei* communities make important contributions in many fields in each country, including politics, business, education and culture. Their presence plays a key role as an intermediary between Japan and the countries where *Nikkei* reside.

JICA assists the Japanese emigrants who have settled in Central and South America in line with the Japanese emigration policy since the end of World War II. JICA has focused on helping emigrants settle into their adopted countries through programs including emigrant loans (for the purchase of land and assisting farming operations), settlement area programs (land development and subdivision) and infrastructure development programs (agricultural production, community facilities, medical care, hygiene and education).

With the decrease in the number of new emigrants and *Nikkei* communities maturing and undergoing a generational transition, the emigration environment has changed with the passage of time. The first generation of emigrants is aging. Many *Nikkei* communities are encountering a situation in which the work age population leaves their communities as migrant workers, causing recession and increased vulnerability in the communities. Such communities face issues involving the loss of a *Nikkei* identity. At the same time, *Nikkei* communities in Japan confront serious social security-related problems of non-participation in medical insurance and pension programs. In addition, these communities have educational issues of truancies among *Nikkei* children due to a lack of Japanese proficiency.

Main JICA Activities and Programs for Japanese Emigrants and *Nikkei*

To support the Japanese emigrants and *Nikkei* confronting these issues, JICA undertakes the following activities and programs.

Knowledge Dissemination

The Japanese Overseas Migration Museum, which opened in Yokohama in 2002, consists of permanent exhibits and special exhibitions that feature the overseas migration history and the present situation of *Nikkei* communities. The museum also provides information online via its website. The museum aims to help understand the history of Japanese emigration as well as the emigrants and *Nikkei* among Japan's general public, especially among the younger generation who will be leading the country in the near future.

Support for Emigrants Abroad

■ Dissemination of Farm Management Practices

To improve farm management skills, JICA dispatches agricultural experts from Brazil, conducts training programs in the agriculturally advanced country of Brazil and also provides practical training for agricultural cooperative staff members. In addition, JICA provides subsidies to assist study groups on agriculture.

■ Medical Care and Hygiene

JICA assists in the management of five *Nikkei* clinics at colonial settlements in Paraguay and Bolivia and the Amazonia Hospital in Brazil. JICA also supports travelling clinics for the colonial settlements in Brazil. JICA assists programs related to medical examinations and nursing care in the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Brazil where there are substantial needs for welfare and medical services for elderly emigrants.

■ Education and Culture

To enhance Japanese-language education among *Nikkei* communities, JICA assists the training and retention of local *Nikkei* Japanese-language teachers. It includes holding joint training sessions for teachers, providing incentives for teachers, purchasing teaching materials, holding third-country training for local teachers and supporting Japanese-language research and study at the Brasil Japanese Center. Furthermore, 30 teachers participated in the Pan-American joint training program for Japanese-language teachers (third-country training) held in São Paulo, Brazil, in fiscal 2009.

■ Upgrading Facilities and Equipment

In fiscal 2009, JICA supported the enhancement of facilities and equipment that included purchasing medical equipment for *Nikkei* clinics in Bolivia and maintenance of facilities for aged persons in Argentina.

Educational Initiatives for the Children of Emigrants

■ Educational Programs for Students of Japanese-Language Schools

JICA organizes a program to provide students with a firsthand opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and society. In this program, *Nikkei* children attending Japanese-language classes run by local *Nikkei* organizations are invited to Japan to attend a public junior high school for a short period, including a homestay at a Japanese family. A total of 39 students from North, Central and South America participated in this program in fiscal 2009.

■ Scholarship for Japanese Emigrants and Their Descendants in Latin America (Program for Developing Leaders in *Nikkei* Communities)

JICA offers peripheral support to *Nikkei* students attending graduate school in Japan through a scholarship to help cover their living expenses and tuition fees. In fiscal 2009, nine new recipients were selected for this program.

Support for *Nikkei* Communities and Local Communities

JICA dispatches Youth Volunteers and Senior Volunteers (*Nikkei* Volunteers) to *Nikkei* communities in Central and South America to assist with Japanese-language education, healthcare and welfare services. As a new assistance initiative in fiscal 2008, JICA established the Special Program for School Teachers (*Nikkei*), where public-school teachers from Japan are dispatched to government-accredited schools in Brazil. In fiscal 2009, 11

teachers were dispatched to Brazil for the first time on a long-term basis (two years). Upon returning to Japan, these teachers are expected to utilize their experiences to play active roles as key sources capable of addressing the needs of *Nikkei* children residing in Japan.

In addition, JICA accepts trainees from Latin American countries. Through proposals from universities, local government and other organizations, including public interest corporations, this program serves to promote nation-building in respective participating countries as well as cross-border human interchange. In fiscal 2009, JICA accepted 130 persons under this program.

Business Loans

The JICA loan program for emigrants and *Nikkei* organizations was terminated in fiscal 2005. At present, JICA only administers repayment of these loans.

Case Study

Initiatives for the Welfare of the Aged

The Aging of the *Nikkei* Community in South America Providing Support in Various Countries with a Focus on Welfare for the Aged

The First "Seminar on Welfare Programs for the Aged in *Nikkei* Communities in South America"

Various programs for the welfare of the aged are being implemented in respective *Nikkei* communities in Latin American countries. In March 2010, the first international seminar was held in São Paulo, Brazil, aiming to share and mutually utilize these programs and activities. The São Paulo Japan-Brazil Aid Association (subsidized by JICA) hosted the "Seminar on Welfare Programs for the Aged in *Nikkei* Communities in South America," and 56 relevant persons from Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay attended the seminar. These participants presented a detailed report on



Observation visit to "Ikoi no Sono," a facility for the aged, at the first "Seminar on Welfare Programs for the Aged in *Nikkei* Communities in South America" held in São Paulo (Photo courtesy of São Paulo Japan-Brazil Aid Association)

the programs implemented in their respective countries and a proposal of forming networks among the various organizations was agreed to in the seminar.

Supporting Welfare for the Aged Combining Various Program Formats (Initiatives in Paraguay)

The *Nikkei* community is aging, with the percentage of the population aged over 65 reaching 14% (2006) in Paraguay, which accepted group immigration from Japan after WWII. Accordingly, Paraguay is implementing the "Program for the Welfare of the Aged in the *Nikkei* Community in Paraguay" throughout *Nikkei* communities since fiscal 2008. JICA is providing assistance which combines the following programs: a program for providing subsidies, the dispatch of *Nikkei* society volunteers and the acceptance of *Nikkei* trainees.

Specific activities in fiscal 2009 include 1) providing medical examinations for the aged (65 years old and above) in *Nikkei* communities (which covered 375 persons); 2) holding a joint training course for leaders of care workers involved in welfare for the aged (159 participants); 3) providing training courses in regional blocks for volunteers engaged in welfare for the aged (total of 294 participants); and 4) providing and utilizing audio-visual equipment.

JICA continues to promote self-sustaining efforts of the *Nikkei* community via these activities while subsidizing the aforementioned

activities and dispatching three *Nikkei* Youth Volunteers and a *Nikkei* Senior Volunteer to provide technical support. JICA also accepted two persons expected to play important roles in Paraguay in the future at Ishikawa Prefectural Nursing School for training in day care service for the aged.

In fiscal 2009, the percentage of aged persons undergoing health examinations improved, with one *Nikkei* community increasing to 79% from a region-wide low. JICA expects that such supporting activities will produce further favorable results in the future.



Training by regional blocks: Training for volunteers engaged in welfare for the aged covered topics such as recreation methods. (Photo by Yoko Tomori, March 2009)



Aged persons undergoing health examinations (Photo by Yoko Tomori, February 2009)