

# Citizen Participatory Cooperation

## — Making International Cooperation Part of the Japanese Culture

Citizen participation in international cooperation takes a variety of formats, including participation in the activities of NGOs and other civic groups as well as JICA's volunteer programs and ODA projects, including Technical Cooperation. Among them, JICA refers to activities implemented based on the initiative of civic groups and the volunteer spirit of individuals as peoples' and others' cooperation activities. JICA identifies these cooperation activities as well as activities for promoting peoples' understanding of international cooperation as Citizen Participatory Cooperation and implements a variety of initiatives.

International cooperation by citizens diversifies approaches for responding to the issues of developing countries. It also promotes more people to become familiar with and to contribute to ODA. This is significant. More people in Japan become aware of the circumstances of developing countries and engage in international cooperation. This in turn revitalizes Japanese communities and advances internationalization. Citizen participatory cooperation is expected to make international cooperation a part of Japanese culture.

A distinct feature of citizen participatory cooperation is its emphasis on the will and initiatives of individuals and groups as well as the opportunity for all people to participate. Please see Volunteer Programs (page 136) for more details on volunteer programs and Partnerships with NGOs and Other Organizations (page 140) regarding the JICA Partnership Program and NGO support programs.

### ■ Using Japan's Domestic Offices as International Hubs

JICA has 17 domestic offices which undertake activities focused on promoting understanding of international cooperation and providing opportunities for participation in various regions throughout Japan. Additionally, JICA's international cooperation promotion officers at International Association offices at local government entities act as liaisons linking JICA with local communities and hold events and seminars and are available for consultation on international cooperation.

At the JICA Global Plaza in Hiroo, Tokyo and the Nagoya Global Plaza in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, persons with experience in overseas cooperation serve as "Global Concierges" and lead visitors at exhibitions that encourage "seeing," "listening" and "touching." Through these exhibitions, visitors can experience actual conditions in developing countries and become aware of global-scale issues faced by people in those regions of the world. Both Global Plazas feature on-site cafés that allow visitors to sample ethnic cuisines and also sell fair trade commodities. In addition, these plazas make available spaces that are ideal for holding seminars and meetings. These areas can also serve as

venues for citizen-led international cooperation activities as well as presentations on the outcomes of such activities.

### ■ Efforts to Promote Understanding about International Cooperation—Programs for Supporting Development Education

JICA implements development education programs at educational forums in partnership with NGOs and schools with the aim of deepening peoples' understanding about the situation in developing countries and enhancing their knowledge of international cooperation activities, including civic activities.

JICA's programs include the "International Cooperation Lectures" (held approximately 2,000 times per year), under which instructors are dispatched to elementary and junior high school classes, as well as the "Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students" (approximately 70,000 applicants per year, junior and senior high school combined), which is an essay competition on international cooperation. Additionally, JICA implements the "Development Education Study Tour for Teachers Program" for teachers interested in development education. This program provides an opportunity for teachers to visit developing countries and incorporate their observations into their coursework upon returning to Japan. JICA also conducts the "Development Education Instructor Training" and creates course materials for learning about development education approaches and case studies.

These citizen participatory cooperation activities are implemented in cooperation with NGOs, local government entities, etc. which focus on linkages with communities. JICA is strengthening its activities so that international cooperation will come to be regarded by Japanese citizens as commonplace and accessible activities, as well as an outstanding characteristic of Japanese culture.

### JICA Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students

JICA implements an essay contest on international cooperation targeting junior high and senior high school students in Japan who will be responsible for the next generation. The aim of the contest is to deepen students' understanding of the situation in developing countries and the need for international cooperation, and to examine what Japan should do as a member of the international community as well as what each and every individual should do.

The following is an excerpt of the winning essay from the contest for junior high school students:

"I'm hungry, but if I read a picture book I can sleep soundly with feelings of joy," said a girl in Afghanistan where food tends

to be scarce. I was shocked to hear these words. Here was a young child, very much hungry, avidly reading a picture book. If you were in this situation, which would you choose: food or picture book? My dream is to become a novelist. My dream is to make all the people in the world who read my books happy and make this world a world filled with smiles. Some people live with the fear that they may die tomorrow. Some people live with the fear that the day may end without having anything to eat. Against these concerns, my dream is to shine a light of hope with the power of words.”

### Global Concierge Program for College Students

At JICA Global Plaza, the Global Concierge Program for College Students is offered for university students in Japan during their spring and summer holidays.

JICA Global Plaza features an “Virtual Global Experience Area,” where displays are set up to facilitate citizens’ understanding of developing country issues and international cooperation. The Plaza is staffed with Global Concierges who can provide clear explanations on the contents of the exhibitions.



Top winners of the essay contest are able to participate in an overseas training trip to a developing country

The Global Concierge Program for College Students is a hands-on program for university students to examine their involvement in international cooperation, through their work as Global Concierges, exchanges with international cooperation practitioners beginning with JICA staff, and the planning and implementation of workshops on international cooperation.



A student taking part in the Global Concierge Program for College Students offers guidance to a visitor