

Support for Japanese Emigrants and Their Descendants

Focusing on Human Resource Development and Elderly Welfare

■ 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, Japan's emigration policy ended in fiscal 1993. Moreover, the circumstances for emigration have changed along with the maturing and generational transition of *Nikkei* communities. The first generation of emigrants is aging, and many *Nikkei* communities are encountering a situation where the working age population leaves as migrant workers, causing recession and increased vulnerability in the communities. Such communities face issues involving the loss of their *Nikkei* identity. At the same time, *Nikkei* communities in Japan confront serious social security-related problems, including non-participation in medical insurance and pension programs. In addition, these communities also face educational issues such as truancy 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.

1. 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 people understand the history of Japanese emigration as well as the emigrants and *Nikkei* among Japan's general public, especially for the younger generation who will be leading the

country in the near future.

2. Support for Emigrants Abroad

1) Dissemination of Farm Management Practices

To improve farm management skills, JICA dispatched *Nikkei* agricultural experts from Brazil, an agriculturally advanced country; conducted agricultural training programs; and provided practical training for agricultural cooperative staff members. In addition, JICA provided subsidies to assist study groups on agriculture. With the advancement of agricultural skills in *Nikkei* communities, JICA terminated the assistance programs at the end of fiscal 2010.

2) Medical Care and Hygiene

JICA assists in the management of five *Nikkei* clinics at colonial settlements in Paraguay, Bolivia and the Amazonia Hospital in Brazil. JICA also supports travelling clinics for the colonial settlements in Brazil. JICA assists programs related to the implementation of medical examinations and nurse care training in countries with a high demand for elderly welfare and medical services, such as the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Brazil and Bolivia.

3) Education and Culture

To enhance Japanese-language heritage education among *Nikkei* communities, JICA assists joint training sessions for local *Nikkei* teachers, the purchase of teaching materials, third-country training for local Japanese-language teachers and research and studies on Japanese-language promoted by the Brasil Japanese Center. Furthermore, 27 teachers participated in the Pan-American joint training program for Japanese-language teachers (third-country training) held in São Paulo, Brazil, in fiscal 2010.

4) Upgrading Facilities and Equipment

In fiscal 2010, JICA supported the enhancement of facilities and equipment, including the purchase of equipment for seminars on medical and health management for elderly people in Brazil and equipment for elderly welfare services in Bolivia.

3. Educational Initiatives for the Children of Emigrants

1) 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 58 students from North, Central and South America participated in this program in fiscal 2010.

2) Scholarship for Japanese Immigrants 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 2010, there were fourteen new recipients participating in this program.

4. 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 2010, 7 teachers participated for the first time in a long-term (two years) volunteer program. Upon returning to Japan, these teachers are

expected to utilize their experiences to play active roles as key resources capable of addressing the needs of *Nikkei* children residing in Japan.

In addition, JICA accepts trainees from Latin American countries. Through training 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 2010, JICA accepted 124 persons under this program.

5. Business Loans

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

Case Study

Dissemination of Farm Management

The Conclusion of Programs in the Agricultural Sector

As one pillar of assistance for Japanese emigrants living abroad, JICA has promoted programs aimed at the development of agricultural production infrastructure. Since the late 1950s, Japan has been operating agricultural research institutes, teaching agricultural management skills, dispatching agricultural experts, and providing training to agricultural cooperatives through several programs targeting Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic. Most of these programs concluded by fiscal 2000, with the final program to teach farm management in Brazil ending in fiscal 2010. The following is an overview of these programs.

Advanced Agricultural Training

The objective of this program was to modernize and improve agricultural skills and management practices in areas where Japanese emigrants reside. JICA implemented training,



An expert gives instruction on bamboo pretreatment methods to *Nikkei* farmers in Roraima State (Photo by Shimada Massanobu [JICA expert])



Akira Ikegami lectures at the Seminar on Vitalizing *Nikkei* Agricultural Cooperatives in South America (Photo by EX Research Institute Ltd.)

passing on advanced agricultural techniques and knowledge about the distribution structure of the agricultural industry. This program started in fiscal 1978, targeting participants from Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia.

In fiscal 2010, three people from Paraguay underwent farm leadership training and acquired the skills they needed to train others at a *Nikkei* agricultural cooperative in Paraná State. One person from Rio de Janeiro learned about cultivation skills at the Associação Hortolândia de Atibaia.

Dispatch of Agriculture Experts Living in Brazil

Since fiscal 1978, JICA has been dispatching agricultural engineers and farmers with an in-depth understanding of the South American agriculture industry to settlements in Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil in an effort to improve regional agricultural skills.

In fiscal 2010, one agroforestry expert was dispatched to a *Nikkei* agricultural cooperative in Amazonas State, Brazil. Experts in bamboo cultivation and processing technologies were also dispatched to an NGO in Pará State and a Japan-Brazil cooperative in Roraima State. These experts conducted training programs for both *Nikkei* and non-*Nikkei* residents.

Practical Training for Staff Members at Agricultural Cooperatives

Started in fiscal 1983, this program worked to improve the quality of management at agricultural cooperatives. Staff members from agricultural cooperatives in Bolivia underwent practical training at an advanced agricultural cooperative in Brazil.

Thanks to assistance from Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), in January 2011 the Cooperativa Central Agrícola e de Colonização do Brasil held 11^o Seminário de Revitalização das Cooperativas *Nikkeis*

(the Seminar on Vitalizing *Nikkei* Agricultural Cooperatives in South America). This seminar was undertaken with the goal of enhancing partnerships among agricultural cooperatives in South America and featured sessions on such topics as the sales strategies and processing technologies required from agribusiness partners in Japan. Former Agricultural Minister Roberto Rodrigues and journalist Akira Ikegami gave presentations on themes such as food production in Brazil and South America, and representatives from *Nikkei* agricultural cooperatives in Brazil and Bolivia organized a panel discussion.

This Seminar was a great success and resulted in the formation of a new agriculture cooperative network by 22 agricultural cooperatives and other groups (one from Argentina and Paraguay; two from Bolivia; and 18 from Brazil). The seminar was also a priceless opportunity for *Nikkei* agricultural cooperatives to advertise their activities to Japanese corporations and trading companies.

Together with Non-*Nikkei* Residents

While the aforementioned programs were undertaken as assistance to *Nikkei* farmers, non-*Nikkei* farmers residing near *Nikkei* settlements were also offered training, mainly in Brazil. As a result, the quantity and quality of agricultural production in the entire community improved. Assistance also helped locals build networks among cooperatives. Thus, support to develop infrastructure for Japanese emigrants ultimately benefitted non-*Nikkei* residents as well.

Japanese emigrants, once the recipients of assistance, are now actively supporting their communities. Thankful for the acceptance and support of local communities and countries, *Nikkei* emigrants continue to work toward the development of the societies they reside in.