

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 the economic and social development as well as the reconstruction of developing countries.

The volunteer programs are widely recognized as representative programs of Japan's international cooperation and are highly praised by partner countries. Furthermore, upon their return to Japan, the volunteers, having developed a global perspective, are expected to be a valuable presence in Japanese society.

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs)

In principle, JOCVs are assigned to developing countries for a period of two years. As summarized by the phrase “together with the local community,” JOCVs live and work together with the communities in the country to which they were sent, speak the same language of the community and carry out activities with an emphasis on raising self-reliant efforts while fostering mutual understanding.

Recruitment campaigns target people between the ages of 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 2011, a total of 1,046 people were sent overseas, with a cumulative total of 36,951 people dispatched to 88 countries since the program was inaugurated in 1965.

Senior Volunteers

Recruitment targets people between the ages of 40 and 69. In recent years, there has been an increase in applicants from retirees seeking to spend their “second life” in a more

meaningful way. In recent years, there has been an increase in applicants from retirees seeking to spend their “second life” in a meaningful way.

Areas of cooperation span nine different sectors, including agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, health and medical care, and human resources (education, culture, sports, etc.). In fiscal 2011, 246 people were sent overseas. To date, a total of 4,874 people have been dispatched to 68 countries.

Youth and Senior Volunteers for Nikkei (Japanese Descendant) Communities, too, are dispatched to contribute to the development of Nikkei communities in Latin America [\[➡ See page 134\]](#).

Support for Returned Volunteers

There are high expectations for returned volunteers, as human resources who welcome diverse cultures and societies, who are open to dialogue, and who take action in a variety of settings, including community, government, educational and corporate activities in Japan. Based on information that was confirmed as of April 1, 2012, the number of local government authorities and boards of education that have special employment quotas for returned volunteers has increased to 50 (24 boards of education and 26 local government authorities).

Hence, JICA has support systems in place to allow volunteers to make use of their experiences in their assigned countries upon their return to Japanese society. Moreover, many returned volunteers take initiatives to address various issues faced by Japanese society, including the implementation of child-rearing support and the revitalization of Japanese communities. JICA will be publicizing its volunteer programs as programs which not only contribute to the development of developing countries but as programs that also serve to “energize Japan.”



A JOCV (fabricator of artificial limbs) who has been assigned to an NGO in the Republic of Malawi explains to coworkers how to make limbs that place the smallest possible burden on the recipients. (Photo by Koji Sato)



A Senior Volunteer for road maintenance and management was sent to Bhutan, where expanding the infrastructure is the highest priority. A rush highway construction project is under construction that will create a link to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. (Photo by Kazuyoshi Nomachi)

JICA and Fostering People with Global Skills at Private-sector Companies

The operations of companies are becoming increasingly global. Examples include the start of business activities in emerging countries and the growing interest in base of the pyramid (BOP) businesses in developing countries. The result is an urgent need to secure employees who have a global perspective and other necessary skills. To help meet this need, the Secretariat of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers is strengthening its relationships with private-sector companies by using a number of new initiatives. One is the establishment of a website with information about examples of joint projects by companies and JOCVs. The theme of the website is seeking possibilities to conduct CSR and BOP businesses by utilizing JOCVs. Other initiatives include project information meetings for companies and a symposium on the theme of challenges for developing the capacity of people with global skills that companies require. The following section explains how Suntory Holdings Limited used JOCV assignments for its employees to give them the skills to do their jobs on a global scale.

Mr. Hiroyuki Ito
Manager, Career Development Division, Suntory Holdings Limited

(Interviewed February 2012)

Using JOCV to Give Employees Global Skills

Training employees so they can do their jobs anywhere in the world is vital to starting business operations in emerging countries and developing countries. We want to create a workforce of people who have global business skills and specialized expertise. These employees must also be able to communicate well with others anywhere in the world and do their jobs while adjusting to life in a different culture. To give our employees these capabilities, we decided to send people to participate in JOCV as a new means of training. I want our employees to use this experience to acquire the skills in languages, accepting other cultures and communications that are essential to doing business on a global scale.

No Concerns about Sending Employees to Countries Where We Have No Presence

When we thought about our human resources development program overseas, we decided to send our employees to overseas locations that include countries where we have no presence. This decision is based on our recognition of the need for up-front investments in human resources. However, we could not determine how to

do this. If we send someone to a country where we don't operate, we may not be able to deal with a problem if something happens. Then I heard about the JOCV program where JICA and companies collaborate to foster the development of people with a global perspective and skills. JICA has much experience in sending people to foreign countries and ensuring their health and safety. I decided to take part in this program because I believed that I could entrust our employees to JICA with confidence. It was just what I needed.

One employee of ours will be dispatched to Hoi An City, Viet Nam, as a JOCV for environmental educational programs in Viet Nam. This individual's primary roles will be to train companies' employees about the importance of protecting the environment and explain the environmental programs of Suntory. We selected a very enthusiastic 28-year-old employee to participate in JOCV program. This individual is currently studying the activities of our Eco Strategy Department and making other preparations for going to Viet Nam.

As a JOCV, I hope this individual acquires the basic knowledge to become a global businessperson, the ability to organize others to achieve goals, and other skills. After returning to Japan, I want this person to make use of the skills gained in Viet Nam in our business operations. For example, I hope this

person can utilize the ability to speak the Vietnamese language. Knowledge acquired as a JOCV will make this individual a strong candidate for working at a Suntory office in Southeast Asia.

JICA as a Business Partner

For this assignment, we worked with JICA to decide on what our employee would do as a JOCV. Working together allowed us to create an ideal program that meets the demands of Viet Nam while also matching our CSR vision and employee training objectives. When we assign employees to our overseas offices, there are big differences in their experiences and how they interact with others in those locations. This is why I am looking forward very much to seeing how our JOCV grows and develops after this experience.

I have high expectations for JICA as a business partner of ours. Companies can use JICA as a way to foster their employees' global skills and JICA gains a source of JOCVs who can utilize their experience at a company. This is an ideal win-win relationship. Making JICA's activities part of our training program will make us stronger as a global organization. At the same time, I hope to use the JOCV program to reinforce Japan's stature as a member of the global community.