

Citizen Participatory Cooperation

— Making International Cooperation Part of the Japanese Culture

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

International cooperation by citizens is significant for several reasons. It diversifies approaches for responding to the issues in developing countries. It also makes more people in Japan aware of the circumstances of developing countries, familiar with ODA, and engaged in international cooperation activities.

This framework, Citizen Participatory Cooperation, also revitalizes Japanese communities, advances internationalization and, moreover, may make international cooperation “a part of Japanese culture”.

A distinct feature of Citizen Participatory Cooperation activities may be their emphasis on the will and initiatives of highly motivated individuals and groups as well as the opportunity for all people to participate. Please see page 126 for more details on Volunteer Programs and Partnerships with NGOs and other grass-roots organizations [🔗 page 130], regarding the JICA Partnership Program and support programs for NGOs.

Using Japan's Domestic Offices as International Hubs

JICA has 17 domestic offices that undertake activities focused on promoting understanding of international cooperation and providing people in the respective regions with opportunities for participation in various related programs 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, hold events or seminars, and also are available for consultation on the series of international cooperation programs.

At the JICA Global Plaza in Hiroo, Tokyo and the Nagoya Global Plaza in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, people with abundant experience on international cooperation and global-scale issues serve as “Global Concierges” and lead visitors to exhibitions that encourage “seeing,” “listening” “touching” and “thinking”. Through these exhibitions, visitors can virtually experience various 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 sell fair trade commodities and allow visitors to enjoy ethnic cuisines. In addition, plazas make available spaces

holding seminars and meetings 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 Educations

JICA supports development education programs at educational forums in partnership with NGOs and schools with the aim of deepening the understanding of issues in developing countries and enhancing knowledge of international cooperation activities, including civic activities.

JICA's programs include the International Cooperation Lectures Service (held approximately 2,000 times per year). This program dispatches ex-Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), ex-Senior Volunteers, Experts, JICA's Staff, and others to school classes mainly as instructors to support development education and international understanding education.



International Cooperation Lectures Service by an ex-JOCV volunteer

Another program is the Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students (approximately 73,000 applicants per year in total), which is an essay competition on international cooperation. JICA also holds a Global Education Contest for photographs, videos, and reports that contribute to global education in various opportunities. International Cooperation Reporter Program dispatches civilians to observe Japan's ODA project sites in developing countries. The participants, after visiting the sites, are obligated to report what they studied by using various opportunities in Japan. “The Study Tour Program for Teachers dispatches teachers interested in development education to schools and education development project sites in developing countries, and the

participants are obligated to conduct lectures incorporating what they studied at the sites in their class after their return to Japan. JICA also creates educational materials for development education, international understanding.

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 familiar 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 for sustainable development.

The following is an excerpt of the winning essay from the 2011 contest for junior high school students:

“I think it is no wonder that countries help and cooperate with each other. However, no country can live in a big family, namely the “world”, without this mindset. If we are a certain family, we do our best to support the family member when his/her country is in trouble, disregarding one's own interests. I believe that this is an indispensable attitude for all of our global family to be happy.”



Winners of 2011 Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students

Junior Global Concierge Program for College Students

At JICA Global Plaza (Hiroo), the Junior Global Concierge Program for College Students is offered for Japanese university students who are interested in international cooperation, have overseas experience or take some action for global issues, etc., during their spring and summer holidays.

JICA Global Plaza features a Virtual Global Experience Area, where displays facilitate citizens' understanding of global issues and international cooperation. The plaza is staffed with Global Concierges who can provide clear explanations on the contents of the exhibitions to visitors.

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



The Junior Global Concierge Program for College Students offers experience to learn more about global issues and international cooperation.