

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).

The characteristics of Japanese emigrants have changed along with the maturing and the 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 relinquishes the community as migrant workers, increasing social and economic vulnerability. Such communities also face issues involving the loss of their *Nikkei* identity, which is emanated from a shared heritage, history and upbringing. At the same time, *Nikkei* communities in Japan confront serious social security-related problems, including non-participation in pension programs. These communities in Japan also face educational issues such as truancy among *Nikkei* children due to a lack of Japanese language proficiency.

Main JICA Programs and Activities 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, aims to disseminate the history of Japanese emigration to the public in general, especially for the younger generations who are prospective leaders of Japan and their respective countries. It also provides opportunities to become acquainted or re-engaged with the emigrants and *Nikkei*. The museum consists of permanent exhibits and special exhibitions featuring the overseas migration history and the present situation of *Nikkei* communities. The museum also provides information on its website.

2. Support for Emigrants Abroad

1) Medical Care and Hygiene

JICA assists in the management of five *Nikkei* clinics at colonial settlements in Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil. JICA also supports travelling clinics for the colonial settlements in Brazil. Furthermore, JICA assists programs involving health insurance, nursing care, medical examinations and day care services with a high demand for elderly welfare and medical services in countries

such as the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Bolivia.

2) Education and Culture

To enhance Japanese-language heritage education among *Nikkei* communities, JICA assists joint training sessions for local *Nikkei* Japanese-language teachers, the purchase of teaching materials, third-country training for local Japanese-language teachers and research on Japanese-language heritage education that is conducted by the Brasil Japanese Center in São Paulo, Brazil. Furthermore, 23 teachers participated in the Pan-American Joint Training Program for Japanese-language teachers (third-country training) held in São Paulo in fiscal 2011.

3) Upgrading Facilities and Equipment

In fiscal 2011, JICA provided funds for elderly welfare service facilities and equipment in Argentina and a basic study concerning regional development programs in Paraguay.

3. Educational Initiatives for the Children of Emigrants

1) Educational Programs for Students of Japanese-Language Schools (reorganized as Education Program for Next Generation *Nikkei* in 2012)

JICA organizes the program targeting *Nikkei* children attending Japanese-language classes run by local *Nikkei* organizations and provides a firsthand opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture, society, and their heritage. This program includes an educational experience in a public junior high school in Japan. A total of 49 students from North, Central and South America participated in this program in fiscal 2011.

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

JICA offers a scholarship covering the living expenses and tuition to support *Nikkei* students attending graduate schools in Japan. In fiscal 2011, nine new students participated 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 for *Nikkei* communities, where public school teachers from Japan are assigned to government-accredited schools in Brazil. In fiscal 2011, six teachers participated in a long-term (21 months) volunteer program for the first time. Upon returning to Japan, these ex-volunteer teachers are expected to utilize their experience to assist with the education of *Nikkei* children residing in Japan.

In addition, JICA accepts *Nikkei* training participants from Latin American countries. The training program consists of training proposals from universities, local government and other organizations in Japan. The program aims to promote nation-building in the respective countries. In fiscal 2011, JICA accepted 114 *Nikkei* training participants 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.

Nikkei Support for the Recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake

Japan received aid from many countries for both disaster relief and reconstruction in the wake of Great East Japan Earthquake. In the immediate response to the disaster, *Nikkei* communities in the Americas have played a particularly important role. Many *Nikkei* communities have collected donations and conducted charitable activities, raising more than ¥1.6 billion (as of September 2011, based on the data from The Association of *Nikkei* & Japanese Abroad). The support to earthquake victims from *Nikkei* communities and *Nikkei* associations demonstrates the maturity of *Nikkei* communities, which is the culmination of JICA's perennial cooperation to ameliorate lives of the emigrants and their descendants over many decades.

Soybeans for One Million Packets of Tofu from Paraguay

To assist the earthquake victims in Japan with Paraguay's resources, the *Nikkei* community has organized a project to send one hundred tons of non-genetically modified soybeans grown by *Nikkei* farmers for making tofu for the disaster survivors. Emigrants from Japan and their descendants account for a large share of soybean production in Paraguay, which is the world's fourth-largest exporter. The soybeans are donations from the *Nikkei* members of the Yguazu Agricultural Cooperative, near Yguazu Falls. The Federation of Japanese Associations in Paraguay collected donations from all over Paraguay for the cost of shipping and producing tofu, with the cooperation of Gialinks Co., Ltd., a Japanese company with years of experience in importing soybeans grown by the *Nikkei* farmers. The soybeans are used to produce tofu, which are distributed to victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake. By February 2012, this project supplied enough soybeans to make one million packets of tofu.

JICA provides assistance for medical clinics, Japanese language schools and other facilities and activities in the Yguazu *Nikkei* community. JICA also dispatches Japanese language *Nikkei* Volunteers to this area as teachers in Japanese schools. Consequently, many people including the younger generation in this region speak fluent Japanese in addition to their official language, Spanish. Six students study medicine, agriculture and other subjects at graduate schools in Japan with scholarships



A ceremony to deliver a letter of gratitude from Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda to representatives of the *Nikkei* community and *Nikkei* associations took place in February 2012 at the official residence of the Japanese ambassador to Paraguay. (Photo by Minoru Iida)

from Program for Developing Leaders in *Nikkei* Communities. The Federation of Japanese Associations in Paraguay receives assistance from JICA in the fields of welfare and Japanese education programs.

Overseas *Nikkei* Donations of More Than ¥1.6 billion

Overseas *Nikkei* communities have donated more than ¥1.6 billion to earthquake relief and rebuilding programs in Japan. The donations were disbursed through the Japanese Red Cross Society and other organizations.

Brazil	600 million yen
Mexico	56 million yen
Paraguay	32 million yen
Argentina	25 million yen
Peru	20 million yen
Bolivia	6 million yen
United States	760 million yen
Canada	90 million yen
Australia	21 million yen
Total	1,610 million yen

Donation Activities were particularly extensive in Brazil, which has the largest *Nikkei* community in South America with 1.5 million *Nikkei*. Immediately after the earthquake on March 11, 2011, five major Brazilian *Nikkei* associations, the Bunkyo-Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Japonesa, Federação das Associações de Províncias do Japão no Brasil, Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, and Aliança Cultural Brasil-Japão, and the Beneficencia Nipo-Brasileira de São Paulo cooperated to collect donations totaling 600 million yen. These associations established the Japan Earthquake Victim Aid Donation Campaign. By March 14, the associations submitted a letter of condolence addressed to the then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan through the Japanese Consulate in São Paulo. A letter of gratitude was sent to these organizations from the Prime Minister through the consulate the following day.

JICA assists these associations with subsidies, *Nikkei* Volunteers and training programs in Japan that focus on elderly welfare and Japanese education.

Letters from Argentina with Messages of Hope for a Recovery

In Argentina, the Centro de Cultura y Idioma Japonés en la Argentina played an instrumental role in managing the TEGAMI Exhibition at the Japanese embassy in Argentina in January 2012. The event was planned primarily by *Nikkei* Volunteers of the Centro de Cultura y Idioma Japonés en la Argentina. The exhibition consisted of "picture letters" drawn by students of the Japanese language school in Argentina to encourage their friends in earthquake-damaged areas. With the support of a Japanese artist living in Germany, the exhibition also included "picture letters" drawn by artists in Japan. More than 350 people visited the exhibition, reaffirming the strong bonds between Japan and Argentina and sending a strong message of hope for recovery.



"Picture letters" drawn by students at the Japanese language school in Argentina (Photo by Asami Nakano)

Professor Emeritus of Earthquake Engineering Holds Seminar to Mark Earthquake's First Anniversary

The Peru-Japan Cooperation Association held an event to mark the first anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake at its Peru-Japan Culture Center in Lima on March 11, 2012.

The commemorative event included an exhibition of messages to Japan collected by *Nikkei* Volunteers from all over Peru. A charity market was held to sell Peruvian handicrafts, with all revenues donated to earthquake recovery activities. In addition, a presentation was given by Dr. Julio Kuroiwa, a professor emeritus of the National University of Engineering in Peru.

Just as Japan, Peru is a country with frequent earthquakes. Dr. Kuroiwa is a second-generation *Nikkei* and an authority in the field of earthquake engineering in Peru. He participated in JICA's technical training course on earthquakes held in Japan during 1961-1962.



A Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer explains to a visitor at the TEGAMI Exhibition in Argentina the origami that symbolizes faith in earthquake recovery. (Photo by Toshiyasu Murai)