

# 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. JICA refers to activities based on the initiative of civic groups or the volunteer spirit of individuals as Citizen's Participatory Cooperation activities. These activities promote the understanding of international cooperation and support a variety of initiatives of stakeholders.

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

The Citizen Participatory Cooperation framework 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 106 for more information about Volunteer Programs and Partnerships with NGOs and other grass-roots organizations [page 110] regarding the JICA Partnership Program and support programs for NGOs.

## Using Japan's Domestic Offices as International Hubs

JICA has 14 offices in Japan that undertake activities focused on promoting the understanding of international cooperation and providing people 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. The officers hold events or seminars and also are available for consultation regarding the series of international cooperation programs.

At the JICA Global Plaza in Ichigaya, Tokyo and the Nagoya Global Plaza in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, people with abundant experience on international cooperation and global 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 international cuisines. More than 900,000 people have already visited the JICA Global Plaza and the number of visitors to the Nagoya Global Plaza now exceeds 280,000. Both locations have become venues at which a wide range of visitors, from children to students and adults, enjoy learning about global issues. In addition, plazas have spaces for holding seminars and meetings about citizen-led international cooperation activities as well as presentations on the outcomes of such activities.



Nagoya Global Plaza

## 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. The aim is to deepen the understanding of issues in developing countries and enhance knowledge of international cooperation activities, including civic activities.

The ‘International Cooperation Lecture’ (held approximately 2,000 times per year) mainly deploys lecturers in elementary and junior high school teaching. There is also an ‘Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School



International Cooperation Lecture by an ex-JOCV volunteer

Students’ essay-writing competition (more than 70,000 applicants per year in total) for essays on themes related to international cooperation. Opportunities are also provided for teachers who have an interest in developmental education to participate in the ‘Study Tour Program for Teachers.’ On these tours, teachers can observe the actual conditions in developing countries and then put their experiences into practice in their teaching strategies once they have returned to Japan. Moreover, teachers engage in ‘Training for Development Education Leaders’ to learn about developmental education methodologies and practical examples and create educational materials.

These Citizen Participatory Cooperation activities are implemented in cooperation with NGOs, local government entities, etc., that focus on linkages with communities. JICA is strengthening its activities so that Japanese citizens will come to regard international cooperation as familiar and accessible activities, as well as an outstanding characteristic of Japanese culture.

## Study Tour Program for Teachers

JICA Tohoku sent eight teachers from junior and senior high schools in five prefectures of the Tohoku region to Aceh

province in Indonesia. In Aceh province, more than 200,000 people lost their lives in the earthquake and tsunami that struck the island of Sumatra in December 2004. In this region, progress with the pace of recovery has been clearly visible during eight years since disaster happened.

During their stay, the participants observed the current situation of the area affected by the disaster. They also had opportunities to talk with people who were involved with the recovery efforts and with educators and students who were engaged in education for disaster prevention at schools in the region. Participants learned about the situation at the time from reference archives and by listening to the accounts of those affected by the disaster. They were fortunate to receive the opportunity to observe the daily lives of the people today, now that they have gotten over the past to some extent, and also to see the everyday routines of the children. The participants invariably received extremely warm welcomes everywhere they visited. There were also kind words of encouragement from local people for the members of participants' families suffering from the disasters in Japan. The full schedule of their visit was completed safely and successfully.

Back in their classrooms, the participants were able to pass on to their students impressions captured in the photographs and items of native costume they brought back with them. Participants also communicated the feelings and strengths that they had experienced first hand in the region. The participants devised various methods to ensure that the lessons they taught back home in Tohoku helped their students acquire a perspective on life overseas as well as on directing their thoughts towards reflecting on the communities in which they live.

In the training undertaken following their return to Japan, the participants exchanged their views on ideas for devising teaching strategies among themselves in a free and open forum format. They also enjoyed the cooperation of other teachers who had participated in the training on previous occasions and engaged in building networks with other teachers. The intention is that this can function as a forum for people involved with education in Tohoku to coordinate activities with each other.



Study Tour Program for Teachers in Indonesia

### 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. The aims of the contest are to deepen students' understanding of the situation in developing countries and the need for international cooperation; to examine what Japan should do as a member of the international community; and to examine what each and every individual should do for sustainable development.

The following is an excerpt of the two winning essays from the 2012 contest for junior high school students:

"People often talk about 'international cooperation.' I think that the real root for international cooperation is 'knowing each

other well.' I have been to Brazil and I know how good Brazil is. Also, having learned about the world, my old friends stopped discriminating. Since March 2011, many countries have come to know about how good Japan is through TV news reports about the Great East Japan earthquake and offered helping hands. Everything starts from 'knowing'."

"People cannot live alone. Countries cannot live alone either and cannot function or grow properly without the support of other countries. The people of the world are the same wherever they live. There are just differences in cultures. Now, I want to create warm and welcoming doorways in the walls of culture."



Winners of 2012 Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students (Category of Senior High School Students)

### Junior Global Concierge Program for College Students

At JICA Global Plaza, 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 Global Experience Zone, where displays facilitate citizens' understanding of global issues and international cooperation. The plaza is staffed with Global Concierges who can provide clear explanations 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. Participants work as supporting staff for Global Concierges, take part in exchanges with international cooperation practitioners such as JICA staff, and assist in the planning and implementation of workshops on global issues and international cooperation.



The Junior Global Concierge Program for College Students gives students the opportunity to learn more about global issues and international cooperation.