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 and the Caribbean. 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 has assisted Japanese emigrants who have settled in Central, South America, and the Caribbean in line with the Japanese emigration policy since the early 1950’s.

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 is leaving the community, thus increasing social and economic vulnerability. Such communities also face issues involving the loss of their Nikkei identity, which originates from a shared heritage, history and upbringing. The Nikkei communities in Japan that consist of migrant workers from the Nikkei settlements of Latin American and the Caribbean 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 provide information about 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

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Case Study

Strengthening Partnerships with Japanese Emigrants and Their Descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean

Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships with Nikkei Communities in Latin America through the First Partnership Promotion Survey in Latin America

The Planning and Migration Affairs Division of the Latin America and Caribbean Department conducted the Partnership Promotion Survey in Nikkei Communities (First Partnership Promotion Survey in Latin America) in Brazil and Paraguay from February 25 to March 9, 2013.

This survey aimed to promote the formation of projects that strengthen partnerships between Japanese private companies and private companies managed by Nikkei which will contribute to the development of economies and societies in Latin America.

To encourage applications to the Survey, JICA Okinawa and JICA Yokohama (both organizations with historical affiliation to Nikkei) hosted the Seminar on Private Sector Partnership Promotion in Latin America, in close cooperation with Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

Many local companies participated in the Seminars and showed a strong interest in Latin America, particularly Brazil which is experiencing economic growth as one of the four BRIC major emerging national economies. A total of 13 companies and organizations participated in the survey from a total of approximately 60 applicants from Japan.

The survey included study visits to local Japanese companies, discussions and visits with Nikkei representatives and local companies, as well as discussions with government agencies. In Brazil, Japan-Brazil Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Parana State (Câmara do Comércio e Indústria Brasil Japão do Paraná) hosted meetings to exchange opinions with local companies. The group of entrepreneurs, Seiwaju School do Brasil, and the Chamber of Commerce and Japanese Industry in Brazil, Câmara de Comércio e Indústria Japonesa do Brasil, shared information on economic conditions in the region and provided the keys for success in dealing with corporate management. In Paraguay, Nikkei agricultural cooperatives and representatives of companies in the settlements of Iguazu, along with the Chamber of Commerce and Japanese Industry in Paraguay (Cámara de Comercio e Industria Japonesa del Paraguay) sponsored a social gathering to provide explanations of the advantages of Paraguay which provide a production base for Brazilian markets. Several of the companies participating in the survey agreed with the opinion that Nikkei societies would be a strong candidate as business partners.

As a result, many of the participating companies became acquainted with Latin America and deepened their understanding of the region. Some of the participating companies have already applied for Public-Private Partnership Cooperation with JICA. Moreover, several participants began business negotiations with the Nikkei representatives they met during the survey.

Participants of the survey listening to an explanation by Consultant/Adviser, Mr. Hirasaki (right) at Brazilian Nikkei company Sansuy.
JICA assists in the management of five Nikkei clinics at settlements in Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil. JICA also supports traveling clinics for 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, as well as third-country training for local Japanese-language teachers and research on Japanese-language heritage education which are conducted by the Brasil Japanese Center in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

3) Upgrading Facilities and Equipment
In fiscal 2012, JICA provided funds for a basic study concerning regional development programs in Nikkei settlements of Paraguay.

3. Educational Initiatives for the Children of Emigrants
1) Education Program for Next Generation Nikkei (previously called Educational Programs for Students of Japanese-Language Schools)
JICA organizes the one-month program targeting Nikkei children aged 12 to 15 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 and a home-stay in Japan. A total of 49 students from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean participated in this program in fiscal 2012.

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 2012, eight new students benefited from this program.

4. Support for Nikkei Communities and Local Communities
JICA dispatches Youth Volunteers and Senior Volunteers to Nikkei communities in Central, and South America and the Caribbean (Nikkei Volunteers) 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 2012, four teachers participated in a long-term (21 months) volunteer program. 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 coordinates Nikkei Training Programs for participants from Latin America and the Caribbean countries. Universities, local government and other organizations in Japan submit proposals to JICA for training programs for Nikkei. The programs aim to promote Nikkei’s contribution to nation-building in the respective countries. In fiscal 2012, JICA accepted 119 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 administers only the repayment of these loans.

Case Study
Dissemination of the History and Achievements of Japanese Emigrants

10th Anniversary of the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum
A symposium held in November 2012 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum. Co-hosted with the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad of Japan, the event attracted approximately 130 participants of the 54th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, researchers, and representatives of mass media. The symposium provided the very first occasion for representatives of Nikkei museums around the world to present and discuss the importance of disseminating the history and knowledge of Japanese migration. Although the population composition of the Nikkei communities vary in each country, participants pledged to use coordination and collaboration among the museums, along with other measures to pass on the history of emigration to future generations. Participants also emphasized that the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum plays an essential role in the execution of the coordination among Nikkei museums and libraries.

JICA established the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in 2002 in an effort to promote greater understanding of the history and achievements of Japanese overseas migration. Dr. Tadao Umesao, an anthropologist who was the founder and the former director-general of the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, directed and supervised the exhibit “Dedicated to Those Japanese Who have Taken Part in Molding New Civilizations in the Americas,” which showed the daily lives of the emigrants.

The Japanese Overseas Migration Museum has welcomed their Imperial Highnesses the Emperor and Empress of Japan. The number of visitors reached 300,000 with an increase in students attending classes on social science and participants of school trips. Many learn for the first time about the Nikkei and the terrible experiences Nikkei suffered during World War II. There is an increasing importance and an obligation to define and transmit the history of Japanese migration by substantiating the network among museums in the coming decade.

Moreover, the Japanese government recognized the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum as an institution holding historical records and materials on April 1, 2013. The recognition confirmed that the collected documents and materials possess significant scholarly and historical value. JICA is determined to prove that Japanese Overseas Migration Museum will continue to be the keystone for dissemination and utilization of the history of Japanese migration.