

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 nine sectors and a diverse range of about 200 sub-sectors, including planning and administration, commerce and tourism, public and non-profitable utilities, human resources, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, health and medical care, industrial production, social welfare, and energy. In fiscal 2013, a total of 1,081 people were sent overseas, with a cumulative total of 38,980 people dispatched



A JOCV (instructor) in Uganda, providing computer training at a secondary school. A curious expression on the students’ faces is impressive.

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 applications from retirees seeking to spend their “second life” in a more meaningful way. They have a strong desire to participate in cooperative activities in developing countries utilizing their

Case Study

Utilization of Overseas Volunteering Program in Collaboration with Private Sector

Contribution of Corporate Human Resources to Local Revitalization in Thailand and Viet Nam through Restaurant Industry

A restaurant company based in Nagoya sent an employee to Thailand and Viet Nam respectively for a year under the JICA’s “Overseas Volunteering Program in Collaboration with Private Sector” that aims at cultivating human resources specialized in overseas expansion. The two volunteers demonstrated their skills and provided support for the restaurant industry, such as business management and so forth.

Mr. Honma, who was sent to Thailand from Sagami Chain Co. Ltd., was engaged in encouraging the historical market of Theppharat

to become a tourist town. He made an active contribution to the town, such as translation of sightseeing brochures and introduction of Japanese foods. In particular, his efforts finally made considerable achievements in attracting Japanese tourists, by creating Japanese pamphlet and teaching Japanese to local employees.

In addition, Mr. Honma was enthusiastic about teaching on how to make Japanese foods, along with learning the concept of Japanese and Thai

foods. “My volunteering experience made me find that action with a strong will is the only way to make a beneficial influence on people. I also learned the importance of showing flexibility in accordance with circumstances,” says Mr. Honma.

Mr. Honma is now working as the manager of a chain store opened in Thailand by the Sagami Chain Co. Ltd. As a goal in the future, he mentions, “I would like to encourage the further development of companies from an international point of view, so that I can contribute to job creation, economic development, and poverty reduction in both Japan and developing countries.”

In this way, the Overseas Volunteering Program in Collaboration with Private Sector has made international contributions to developing countries, as well as being recognized as an excellent program that cultivates global human resources. Established in 2012, this program has dispatched 14 volunteers and made agreements with 47 companies to dispatch their employees, as of the end of 2013.



Mr. Honma teaching Japanese to local children

solid experiences, including specialized knowledge and technologies, cultivated over long years.

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 2013, 268 people were sent overseas. To date, a total of 5,406 people have been dispatched to 71 countries.

Volunteers for Japanese Communities Overseas and Senior Volunteers for Japanese Communities Overseas, too, are dispatched to contribute to the development of *Nikkei* communities in Latin America, and short-term volunteers are dispatched for periods of less than one year.

● 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 has been confirmed as of 2013, the number of local government authorities and boards of education that have special employment quotas or preferential treatment for returned volunteers has increased to 58 local governments/educational boards.



A senior volunteer in Pohnpei Campus, College of Micronesia (Crops and livestock products processing), disseminating hygienic processing and preservation methods for agricultural products to the public (Photo by Miki Tokairin)

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.”

Case Study

Cooperative Support for Reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake by the Reconstruction Agency, JICA and JOCA

JOCV's experiences greatly contribute to earthquake disaster reconstruction

The enormous earthquake tremendously wrecked and damaged East Japan. Former JOCVs started to work as volunteers in the devastated areas immediately after the earthquake struck and they were expected to cope with deficient of human resources in reconstruction. In cooperation with the Reconstruction Agency, JICA and Japan Overseas Cooperative Association (JOCA), those with experience as JOCVs are working as “Reconstruction Agency Municipal Support Staff” in the devastated areas. They are engaged in reconstruction by providing their expertise, such as civil engineering, construction and education.

Exercise of communication and coordination skills

Former JOCVs have experience of living under one roof with local people in other countries and also working together closely with them in circumstances with different languages or customs. Their experience-based communication and coordination skills made great contributions to the reconstruction. Consequently, former JOCVs were expected to cope with deficient of human resources in reconstruction.

To respond to such an expectation, a cooperation agreement was concluded on January 31, 2013 among the Reconstruction Agency, JICA and JOCA which is organized by former

JOCVs. In the agreement, coordinating officers were allocated to reconstruction offices at the prefectures, in order to survey the needs of devastated areas. At the same time, the Reconstruction Agency employed former JOCVs as fixed-term “Reconstruction Agency Municipal Support Staff.”

On January 17, 2013, one former JOCV was assigned to the reconstruction office of Miyagi Prefecture as the first coordination officer. From March 1, 2013, three

additional former JOCVs were allocated to Onagawa town and Kesenuma city of Miyagi Prefecture.

As of March 31, 2014, the reconstruction offices in each prefecture have two coordinating officers, respectively. 80 former JOCVs in total are engaged in the devastated prefectures as follows: 15 in Fukushima, 25 in Miyagi, 34 in Iwate and coordinating officers in each prefecture.



Observing the health condition of mother and baby, by using her volunteer experience as a midwife in Laos