

# Citizen Participatory Cooperation

## Making International Cooperation Part of Japanese Culture

Citizen participation in international cooperation takes a variety of forms, including participation in the activities of NGOs and other civic groups as well as participation in JICA's ODA projects, such as JICA's volunteer programs and Technical Cooperation. JICA refers to activities based on the initiative of civic groups or the volunteer spirit of individuals as Citizen 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 enhances the cooperation effect by diversifying approaches for responding to critical issues in developing countries, and it also makes Japanese society widely aware of the circumstances of developing countries, more familiar with ODA, and more engaged in international cooperation activities. The Citizen Participatory Cooperation framework is also expected to facilitate the revitalization of Japanese communities and, moreover, make international cooperation "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. See page 108 for more information about volunteer programs and Partnerships with NGOs and Other Organizations [→ page 112] regarding the JICA Partnership Program and support programs for NGOs.

### ● Using Japan's Domestic Offices as International Hubs

JICA has 14 offices in Japan. Many domestic institutions have visiting programs and undertake activities focused on promoting understandings of international cooperation and providing opportunities for participation in various related programs throughout Japan. Additionally, JICA's international cooperation promotion officers at local government entities nationwide, who play the role as liaisons linking JICA with local communities, hold events or seminars and also are available for consultation regarding the series of international cooperation programs, especially citizen participatory cooperation.

At the JICA Global Plaza in Ichigaya, Tokyo, and the Nagoya Global Plaza in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, people with abundant experiences in international cooperation and global issues serve as Global Concierges and lead visitors to exhibitions that encourage seeing, listening, touching, and thinking. Through these exhibitions, with intelligible explanation, visitors can virtually learn and experience various conditions in developing countries and become aware of global issues faced by people in those regions of the world. Thus, there are an increasing number of schools that choose these sensory exhibitions as a school-trip destination. Global Plazas feature on-site cafés that sell fair-trade commodities and allow visitors to enjoy international cuisines; 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



Nagoya Global Plaza

such activities. In 2013, JICA Global Plaza broke the 1.07 million mark in total visitors, while there were about 340,000 visitors in total to the Nagoya Global Plaza. [→ see the Column]

### ● Efforts to Promote Understanding about International Cooperation

#### Programs for Supporting Development Education

Taking advantage of having domestic and overseas bases for international cooperation, JICA supports development education programs at educational forums in partnership with NGOs, local governments, and schools. The aim is to deepen the understandings of issues in developing countries and enhance knowledge of international cooperation activities, including civic activities.

For children and students, the International Cooperation Lecture, held approximately 2,000 times per year, mainly deploys former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers as lecturers in schools. There is also an Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students, an essay-writing competition that receives more than 70,000 total applicants per year, for essays on themes related to international cooperation.

#### Visitors to JICA Global Plaza Exceed One Million

JICA Global Plaza was established in April 2006 as a base for promotion of civic international cooperation. Having many users, the plaza plays a role as a place to gain better knowledge and understanding of international cooperation and also to provide communication, interaction, and training opportunities. In October 2013, seven and a half years after its establishment, the plaza reached one million visitors. In celebration of this achievement, in the presence of special adviser Sadako Ogata, JICA held a ceremony with first-year students of Gunma Prefectural Kiryu Girls High School on a field trip.





International Cooperation Lecture

For teachers, the Study Tour Program for Teachers allows teachers to observe the actual conditions in developing countries and then put their experiences into practice in their classes once they have returned to Japan. JICA provides about 20 courses per year and about 170 teachers participate in the program every year. In March 2014, JICA provided 25 teachers with the first Meeting on Sharing Practices, intended to follow up with teachers who are actively involved in development education after they return from the Study Tour Program for Teachers. JICA also holds the Training Program for Development Education Leaders, designed to provide methods and case examples regarding development education, as well as creating related educational materials. [ → see the Column]

### ● For Development of Global Human Resources

Along with promoting prioritization of development education in school education, JICA is also engaged in forging collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) as well as the prefectural boards of education. In addition to this, JICA is also working on correlating school curriculum guidelines with development education in order to gain an understanding from officials involved in educational administration. From December 2011 to March 2014, JICA Global Plaza and the National Institute for Educational Policy Research jointly carried out a project titled Comparative Study on International Education for the Global Age. This project was intended to seek ideas for Japan's future education curriculum and international education by conducting a trend survey and comparative analysis on education curricula and international-education systems in other countries. For future revision of education curricula, MEXT is now considering "21st century competencies," which are composed of basic literacy skills, collaborative thinking and problem solving abilities, and practical



A seminar to report on Comparative Study on International Education for the Global Age

abilities. With regard to these skills and abilities, the results of the survey show that development education or international-understanding education will be effective for acquisition of collaborative thinking and problem solving abilities and practical abilities.

In June 2012, a proposal titled Strategy for Developing Global Human Resources was advocated by the Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development, chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary. As an activity in light of the strategy, JICA is providing the Field Study Program for College Students on International Cooperation in order for undergraduate students to acquire a global perspective and skills to identify and resolve problems. In 2013, JICA provided 44 college students with international cooperation field-survey exercises in Viet Nam and Laos as well as prior and subsequent training programs in Japan.

### ● For Practice and Promotion of Development Education at Schools

In order for teachers to carry out development education, it is also important to gain understandings from those involved in educational administration, including prefectural boards of education. On this account, JICA is providing educational supervisors with Study Tour Program for officials involved in educational administration. Along with developing partnerships with the education centers of local governments, JICA affiliates sometimes deliver lectures at teacher-training events conducted by local governments for the purpose of facilitating the understandings of JICA projects and developing countries. In fiscal 2013, following Saitama and Gunma prefectures, the Global Plaza started to lend its showpieces to the Niigata Prefectural Education Center for exhibition. Not only have public exhibitions at each center received favorable reviews, they are also popular with students visiting the center through school programs on field trips. In an induction training course for newly hired teachers in Saitama Prefecture, all participants visit the exhibition.

#### Possibility of Development Education in Special-Needs Schools

Ms. Kana Shimizu, who was a teacher at Gunma Prefectural Haruna Special-Needs School and is now working at Takasaki City Tsukasawa Junior High School, visited Bhutan in 2012 on the Study Tour Program for Teachers. She created a class featuring Bhutan with the theme "All are different, and all are good." In the JICA Global Education Contest of 2013, Ms. Shimizu received high praise for her class, which was well designed to encourage students to change their awareness and actions; as a result, she won the JICA Global Plaza Director's Prize.

In addition, special-needs education teachers who have visited the training program set up a special-needs education team, Team Tokushi (literally meaning "special needs") about four years ago, and they are continuously working on research and practical activities.



"Development education enables broadening students' world and also accelerates their spiritual growth," says Ms. Shimizu.