

Volunteer Programs

“There is always something you can offer” 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, the programs are expected to act as a means to develop human resources with global perspectives that are valuable to Japanese society.

● JICA’s Volunteer Programs

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) were dispatched to the first five nations, namely Laos, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Kenya, in fiscal 1956. The JOCVs celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2015.

Along with big changes in the environment surrounding volunteer programs over 50 years since their establishment, JICA’s volunteer programs have grown.

For JOCVs, recruitment targets people between the ages of 20 and 39. An approximate total of 40,000 people have been dispatched to 88 countries so far. For Senior Volunteers, recruitment targets people between the ages of 40 and



A JOCV in community development and his counterparts in Laos (photo by Kenshiro Imamura)

69. 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. As well as long-term volunteers, short-term volunteers are dispatched for periods of less than one

The 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the JOCVs: Ever-Evolving Volunteer Programs



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Always “Together with the Local Community”

This year is the 50th year since the first members of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers were dispatched to Laos under JICA’s volunteer program. Approximately 47,000 civil volunteers have served in 96 countries so far, with enthusiasm to contribute to the three objectives of the volunteer programs that have remained unchanged since their establishment: (1) contribution to the socioeconomic development of recipient countries; (2) promotion of international friendship and bilateral relationships based on mutual understanding; and (3) development of human resources through cooperative activities and the return of such developed human resources to Japanese society.

The volunteers are engaged in solving problems that the societies of developing countries face under severe circumstances that are quite different from those in Japan. These issues are in various fields, including agriculture, health care, education, and administration, for example, and they deal with those issues through extermination of an epidemic disease or contribution to school-teachers’ capacities by developing teaching guidelines on school subjects. Japanese morals and styles, such as being punctual, being tidy, and valuing teamwork are well accepted by local people through joint activities and daily life, and

these are passed along to other local people.

At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake, many caring messages and support were received from people in the countries where JICA volunteers had worked. This is proof that JICA volunteers have developed trust, friendships, and mutual understanding through experiencing good times and hard times together with local people. The volunteers are active in their own organizations and in society after their return to Japan. Many returned volunteers participate specifically in overcoming local challenges such as the revitalization of villages, multicultural coexistence, the aging population and lower birthrate, and internationalization. In areas stricken by the Great East Japan Earthquake, over 100 returned volunteers have joined the Reconstruction Agency and are still active.

Here I have mentioned various overseas and domestic outcomes of the volunteer programs. We would like to take this opportunity of the 50th anniversary to communicate about ourselves, including our history, achievements, and future plans, and we would be very happy if you got to know more about us.

In future, our volunteer programs will keep evolving and adapting to challenges in the next 50 years, with programs that many people can participate in and that always maintain the position “together with the local community.”

year. To date, a total of around 47,000 people have joined these JICA volunteer programs.

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. This style of cooperation has been carefully handed over to new generation for 50 years.

● Development of Human Resources with Global Perspectives

Lately, JICA’s volunteer programs are highly regarded by local governments, private sector, universities, etc. as opportunities to develop capabilities in solving problems, communication, dealing with diverse cultures, etc., through volunteer activities and experiences living with local people in developing countries. The number of job offers to volunteers who have returned home increased from 304 in 2009 to 1,950 in 2014.

Furthermore, to make use of technologies and knowledge of domestic partners, including local governments, private sector, and universities, in solving development challenges



A Volunteer for Japanese Communities Overseas, an incumbent primary school teacher, teaches origami to Brazilian private school students in kindergarten and first grade. (Photo by Atsushi Shibuya)

in developing countries, JICA cooperates with such entities to dispatch volunteers in the form of cooperation agreements with 6 local governments, 83 private companies, and 14 universities. Such initiatives are expected to promote the usage of rich human resources and knowledge of each entity or company for the benefit of developing countries, which in return will lead to high evaluation of the cooperation by the subject countries. At

Case Study

Measures against Epidemic Diseases by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

Fight Epidemic Diseases Together with Local People and Local Governments

The history of the JOCVs is also the history of volunteer members implementing various measures against epidemic diseases.

Contribution to the Eradication of Smallpox

The only epidemic disease that humanity has ever successfully eradicated is smallpox. It is not widely known that JOCVs were active in Africa, the last major battlefield for the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s. In response to a request by the World Health Organization (WHO), the first team of 13 members, consisting of 8 inspectors who searched for smallpox patients, along with 4 vehicle engineers and 1 radio operator to support them, were sent to Ethiopia in 1972. The team intently explored the land in remote regions and in the depths of the mountains carrying their sleeping bags. Through a series of activities, from finding patients in crowded places like markets, preventing further infection by vaccinating people close to the identified patients, searching for sources of infection for the patients, to repeating the same process, the scope of smallpox was narrowed. The eradication of smallpox was announced in 1980, and it was not by accident that JICA’s volunteers were working in the Horn of Africa,

where the last smallpox patient was found.

Since then, many JOCVs have contributed to the elimination of epidemic diseases. Members with health care expertise worked in medical institutions and inspection facilities, while others worked closely with local people and local health administrators.

Coordination with Technical Cooperation

In the 2000s, to cope with the serious situation of the spread of AIDS in Africa, 260 volunteers, mainly without medical expertise, were dispatched to different African countries and engaged in activities such as preventive education and patient care. About 70 volunteers were dispatched to the Pacific region and Africa to implement measures against malaria and were involved in activities such as the diffusion of preventive measures, mainly to mothers and children, focused on fighting the mosquitoes that carried malaria. To fight the three major infectious diseases, the two mentioned above plus tuberculosis, many volunteers were successful through



A JOCV supervising cleaning of a leg affected and thickened by filariasis in Bangladesh

coordination with other forms of support, such as technical cooperation projects, the dispatch of experts, and financial assistance arranged by JICA.

It can be said that the roles played by the volunteers for polio eradication and improvement of vaccination systems in various countries, and implementation of measures against the so-called neglected tropical diseases, including Chagas disease in Latin America, Guinea worm disease in Africa, and filariasis in Bangladesh and the Pacific, not only received high evaluation by the recipient countries’ health ministries and WHO, but they also provided encouragement to diseased people, among others, and were appreciated by them.

the same time, the experience of international cooperation is expected to provide opportunities to develop human resources to deal with the globalization of Japan.

● **Strengthening Ties with Japanese Society and Contributions to Japanese Society**

The JICA volunteers who have completed their missions in developing countries and returned to Japan are expected to contribute to overcoming challenges in Japanese society, such as multicultural coexistence and revitalization of local communities, as human resources with experiences in welcoming diverse cultures and societies, being open to dialogue, and taking actions in a variety of settings.

Many returned volunteers take initiatives to address various issues faced by Japanese society, including the implementation of child-rearing support, earthquake disaster reconstruction, and the revitalization of Japanese communities. Volunteer programs became known as programs which not only contribute to the development of developing countries but also serve to “energize Japan.”

Based on information that has been confirmed as of 2014, the number of local

government authorities and boards of education that have special employment quotas or preferential treatment for returned volunteers has increased to 74 local governments/educational boards.

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.



A Senior Volunteer for Japanese Communities Overseas serving in a nursing home for the elderly in Brazil (photo by Atsushi Shibuya)

Case Study

Activities in the Field of Sports in Volunteer Programs

International Cooperation through Sports

Many volunteers supported international cooperation through sports, including the spread of physical education classes at schools and the development of athletes in competitions.

JICA involves itself in the Sport for Tomorrow program, designed to promote the value of sports and the Olympic movement to all generations around the globe, in preparation for Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. JICA aims to expand the dispatch of volunteers engaged in sports-related jobs, and provide more opportunities for people in developing countries to enjoy sports.

Cambodia: International Cooperation through Adapted Sports (JICA and the University of Tsukuba)

For the purpose of “improving understanding of disabled people by experiencing adapted sports — the types of sports that people can enjoy regardless of being able or disabled and regardless of age,” five students from the University of Tsukuba were sent to Cambodia as JOCVs and held an event for people to experience playing games such as “blind soccer,” “sitting volleyball,” and “Boccia,”* together with Hearts of Gold, a recognized NPO; the Olympic Committee of Cambodia; and Cambodian Mekong University and its student

volunteers. The primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary students who participated in the event played each game under the same conditions and rules as persons with disabilities. They experienced the enjoyment and difficulties of playing the games, and improved their understanding of persons with disabilities.

Ecuador: An Event for Sports and English, UNDOKAI

In cooperation with her counterpart, Satsuki Ueki, a JOCV for youth activities stationed at the Educational Primary School Attached to Manuela Cañizares Teacher Training School, held an event, UNDOKAI, consisting of games such as “Running and Listening,” where knowledge of English and physical running capabilities are combined. The objective was to develop a spirit of independence and cooperation while presenting the students’ learning achievements. Preparation and management of the event were left to the students. The program proceeded smoothly on the day of the event, and the participants enjoyed the event very much. Satsuki said that she was

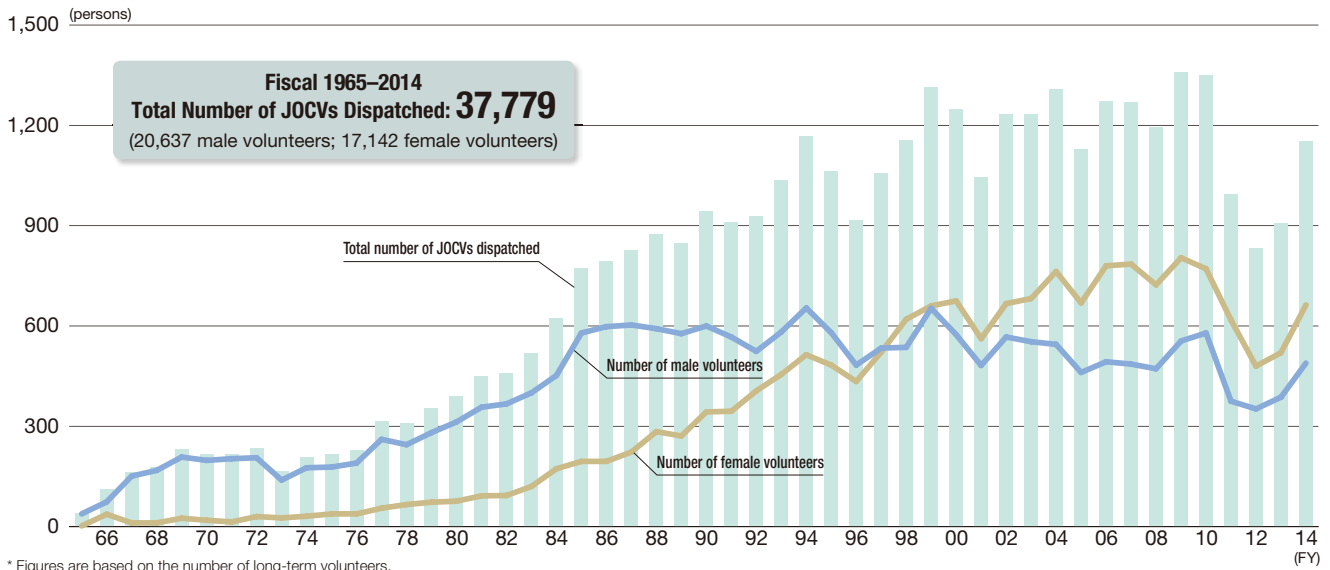


Students enjoying UNDOKAI, the Event for Sports and English, in Ecuador

impressed by the words of her counterpart, who said, “I have learned that an event is successful when the students gain self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment.”

JICA continues to contribute to fostering and developing human resources in developing countries by making use of the power of sports that “connects people” and “brings about a sense of unity and vitality to communities.”

* An official Paralympic sport developed for competition among people with severe cerebral palsy or people with severe disturbance of movement of their extremities on similar levels. Boccia means “ball” in Italian.

The Number of JOCVs Dispatched over 50 Years

● **Efforts to Implement Volunteer Programs with a Focus on Quality**

JICA volunteers work on improving the effects of cooperation on diversifying development challenges by working together with JICA's other projects, volunteer organizations of other countries, and international institutions, in accordance with the development cooperation policy of Japan.

Efforts have been made in recent years to improve the quality of the programs to maximize the effects of cooperation by flexibly dealing with diversifying development challenges, such as fighting international problems that include epidemic diseases and environmental issues, initiatives to develop local industries and small and medium-size enterprises, and development activities through culture and sports.

Case Study **Assisting the Tokyo Global Youth Camp**

High School Students Attend Trial Training at JICA Training Centers

The Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, in cooperation with JICA, held the Global Youth Camps, aiming at developing human resources with the awareness of being part of the international community, the will to contribute to society, and the capability to act independently. In the summer of 2014, 99 high school students from Metropolitan Tokyo attended training courses, including pre-assignment training for the JOCVs on a trial basis.

Teachers Will also Participate in 2015

The programs were held twice, at both JICA's Komagane Training Center in Nagano Prefecture and Nihonmatsu Training Center in Fukushima Prefecture.

The participants stayed for six days with the JOCV candidates, who were going through pre-assignment training. They attended courses such as language lessons to prepare for volunteers' assignments and workshops to gain practical skills on a trial basis.

In the workshops "to think about richness," lively discussions took place about richness that cannot be measured by economic indices alone, by comparing pictures of families from different countries.

During the programs, Hideto Hiruma, then the Chairman of the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, visited the JICA Nihonmatsu Training Center. He said, "For high school students to participate in workshops to challenge issues for which there are no

clear solutions, think about them on their own, discuss them with other students, form opinions, and present them is a rare experience that cannot be gained in a regular classroom situation. In cooperation with JICA, we would like to continue activities to develop human resources with global perspectives. We would also like to consider participation by school teachers."

Feedback from the participants included

comments such as, "Going through the training made me feel more than before that I would like to work in a developing country in future as a JOCV. I would like to contribute to international cooperation and exchanges through sports that I'm fond of," and "I could see that the candidates for JOCVs highly value relationships with their peers in their daily lives. From now on, I would also like to think about what can be done to make the world better, not only on my own but also with other people with various opinions."

Favorable reviews were received that pointed out that the programs would cultivate capabilities to act independently and instill international perspectives in young people. In addition to the Tokyo Global Youth Camps for high school students, training is also scheduled for school teachers in fiscal 2015.



Presenting the workshop results, JICA Nihonmatsu Training Center