Support for Japanese Emigrants and Their Descendants

Focusing on Human Resources Development and Elderly Welfare

Evolving Issues and Challenges Weighing on Japanese Emigrants and Nikkei Communities

There are currently more than 3.2 million Japanese emigrants and their descendants (Nikkei) living around the world, with the majority living in North America, Latin 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 had been assisting to settle in the new lands and stabilize livelihoods for Japanese emigrants who have settled in Latin America and the Caribbean in line with Japanese emigration policy until 2005.

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 some Nikkei communities are encountering a situation where some of the working-age population is leaving the settlements, increasing social and economic vulnerability of the Nikkei communities.

Accordingly, JICA supports Japanese emigrants and Nikkei focusing on human resources development and elderly welfare. JICA also engages in establishing relationships between Japanese private sector and Nikkei companies, or companies in Latin America and the Caribbean owned or managed by Japanese descendants, by promoting partnership between Nikkei community and Japanese private-sector.

The Main JICA Programs and Activities for Japanese Emigrants and Nikkei

To support 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 disseminate the history of Japanese emigration to the public in general, especially for those in the younger generation who are prospective leaders of Japan. It also provides opportunities to become acquainted or reengaged with emigrants and Nikkei. The museum consists of permanent exhibits and special exhibitions featuring the history of overseas migration and the present situation of Nikkei communities. The museum also provides information on its website [see the Case Study below].

2. Support for Emigrants Abroad

1) Medical Care and Hygiene

JICA assisted in the management of five Nikkei clinics at settlements in Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil in fiscal 2014. JICA also supports travelling clinics for settlements in Brazil. Furthermore, JICA assists programs involving, nursing care, medical examinations, and day-care services in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia.

2) Education and Culture

JICA assists Japanese language heritage education among Nikkei communities. In addition to joint training sessions for local Nikkei Japanese-language teachers, as well as third-country training for them, JICA supported the Brazil Japanese Center.

Working Closer with Local Governments to Support Nikkei Communities

JO MM of JICA’s Yokohama International Center, which marked its tenth anniversary in 2012, is working to strengthen cooperation with major prefectures of origin of Japanese emigrants, major migration museums, and neighboring local governments.

Toward Assistance for the Future

The prefectures Hiroshima, Okinawa, Kumamoto, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Wakayama, in that order, are the six major prefectures of origin of Japanese emigrants. A map of Japan on permanent exhibit at JO MM depicts the prefectural emigrant statistics in 3-D form, demonstrating the characteristics of overseas emigration by region.

JO MM offered a special exhibition with Okinawa Prefecture in March 2014, and with Wakayama Prefecture in March 2015. These exhibitions aimed to strengthen future cooperation

with major prefectures of origin of Japanese emigrants. These exhibitions not only featured the prefectural history of emigrants, but also introduced the path of Japanese emigrants and their descendants. Activities of relevant institutions and organizations in the respective prefectures were also presented. The exhibitions also focused on JICA’s Nikkei Volunteers and Nikkei Training Program to enhance the knowledge of present Nikkei communities.

Growing interest in Nikkei communities in recent years in Okinawa, Wakayama, and other major prefectures of origin of Japanese emigrants is accelerating their networking with Japanese emigrants and their descendants. Through these efforts, JOMM encourages visitors to view Nikkei communities and emigration as an ongoing process rather than a historical fact.

JOMM will continue to collaborate with prefectures of origin of Japanese emigrants through joint research and the sharing of collections.

3) Upgrading Facilities and Equipment
JICA provided funds for regional development programs in Nikkei settlements in Paraguay in fiscal 2014.

3. Educational Initiatives for the Children of Emigrants
1) Education Program for Next-Generation Nikkei
JICA organizes a one-month program that provides a firsthand opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture, society, and heritage. Targeting Nikkei students aged 12 to 15 attending Japanese-language classes run by local Nikkei organizations, the program includes an educational experience in a public junior high school and a homestay in Japan. A total of 50 students from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada participated in this program in fiscal 2014.

2) Scholarship for Japanese Emigrants and Their Descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean: Program for Developing Leaders in Nikkei Communities
JICA offers a scholarship covering living expenses and tuition to support Nikkei students attending graduate schools in Japan. Five new students benefited from this program in fiscal 2014.

4. Support for Nikkei Communities and Local Communities
JICA dispatches Youth Volunteers and Senior Volunteers to Nikkei communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, called Nikkei Volunteers, to assist with Japanese-language education, health care, and welfare services among others. 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 2008. Two teachers participated in a 21-month volunteer program in fiscal 2014. Upon returning to Japan, these former volunteer teachers are expected to take full advantage of their experience to assist with the education of Nikkei children residing in Japan, among other activities. There were 31 volunteers who participated in JICA’s short-term volunteer program to Nikkei communities in Latin America and the Caribbean in fiscal 2014, which was launched in fiscal 2012.

In addition, JICA coordinates Nikkei Training Programs for participants from Latin America and Caribbean countries. Universities, local governments, public organizations, and private enterprises in Japan submit proposals to JICA for training programs to be received by Nikkei. JICA accepted 144 Nikkei training participants under this program in fiscal 2014.

5. Strengthening Partnerships with Nikkei Communities in Latin America and Japan’s Private Sector
JICA dispatched the Third Partnership Promotion Survey Team to Brazil and Peru in 2014 with an aim to contribute to economic and social development in Latin America, through strengthening partnerships between Japanese private companies and private companies owned or managed by Nikkei in those countries. Some of the Japanese companies that participated in the survey now utilize JICA Private-Sector Partnership Projects, such as the Feasibility Survey with the Private Sector for Utilizing Japanese Technologies, the Small and Medium-Size Enterprise (SME) Partnership Promotion Survey, the Overseas Volunteering Program in Collaboration with the Private Sector, and the Nikkei Training Program, to promote business partnerships with Nikkei companies.

6. 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.