

Volunteer Programs

Citizens-Based International Cooperation Pursued with Local People

JICA's volunteer programs support activities by citizens who volunteer with an earnest desire 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 grassroots-level international cooperation extended by the Government of Japan and JICA 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.

● Expanding JICA Volunteer Programs; More Than 50,000 Volunteers Already Sent

Twenty-nine Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) were dispatched to the first five nations, namely Laos, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Kenya, in fiscal 1965. 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 expanded and grown. For JOCVs, recruitment targets people between the ages of 20 and 39. For Senior Volunteers, recruitment targets people between the ages of 40 and 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 year.

In January 2017, the accumulated total number of JICA volunteers dispatched overseas exceeded 50,000, of which over 40,000 were JOCVs. The number of recipient countries is now 88. JICA volunteer activities pursued together with the local community have been continuing for more than 50 years since the program started, and are highly praised both in Japan and overseas. In August 2016, JICA was the first Japanese organization to win the Ramon Magsaysay Award, which is called Asia's Nobel peace prize [→ see page 4 for details].



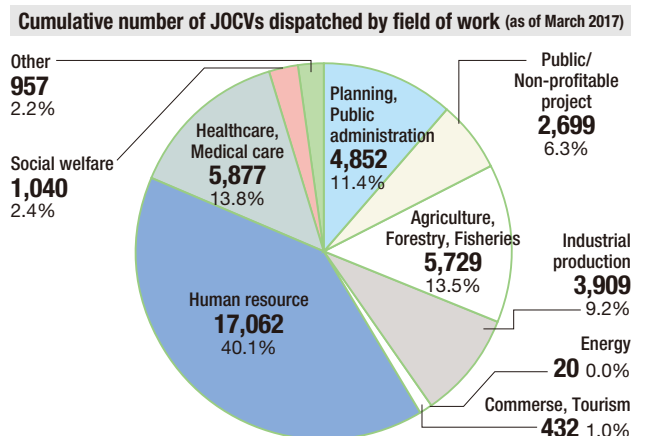
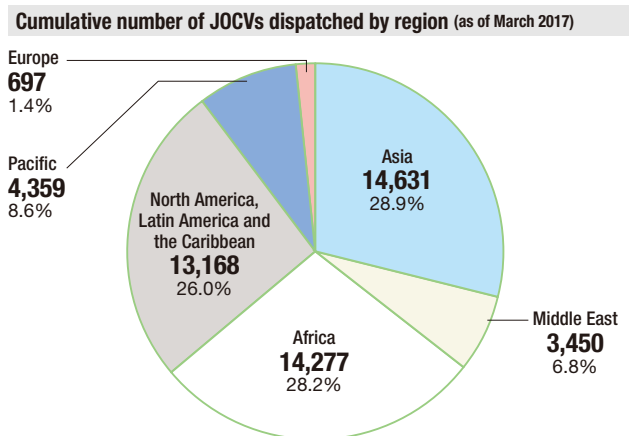
A JOCV teaching Japanese at the University of Costa Rica (Photo by Kenshiro Imamura)

In November 2016, an agreement for the dispatch of JOCVs was signed between the governments of Myanmar and Japan. In response, preparations have been under way so that the first JOCVs to Myanmar can be dispatched as early as January 2018.

JICA's volunteer programs have been enhancing JICA's basis to expand volunteers' opportunities for participation and success. The number of training sessions and dispatches of volunteers for *Nikkei* communities increased from one to two annually in April 2017. JICA will endeavor to follow this aspiration and passion continuing uninterrupted from the very first JICA volunteers, and to carry out volunteer programs and make improvements and reforms in a manner suitable to the times.

● Contributing to Human Resource Development for Japan and the World

Lately, JICA's volunteer programs are highly regarded 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 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, revitalization of



local communities, child-rearing support, and earthquake-disaster reconstruction as human resources with experiences in welcoming diverse cultures and societies, being open to dialogue, and taking actions in a variety of settings. Volunteer programs became known as programs which not only contribute to the development of developing countries but also serve to “energize Japan and the world.” The number of job offers to volunteers who have returned home increased from 304 in 2009 to 1,891 in 2016. The number of authorities and organizations that have special employment quotas or preferential treatment for returned volunteers increased to 17 universities, 36 boards of education, and 70 local governments as of fiscal 2016.

JICA volunteers could be provided with opportunities to acquire a local business mind-set. In fiscal 2016 JICA established a new program of sending newly selected JICA volunteers to the local economic vitalization activities being carried out in various regions of Japan as interns, either before being sent abroad or after returning from overseas.

● **Enhancing Cooperation with Various Partners in Japan**

To make use of technologies and knowledge of domestic partners, including local governments, private sector, and universities, in solving development challenges in developing countries, JICA cooperates with such entities. JICA’s cooperation contributes not only to overcoming challenges faced by developing countries during the course of advancement but also to cultivating human resources for the business globalization intended by such entities. During fiscal 2016, seven volunteers were sent in partnership with local governments, 17 with the private sector, and 142 with universities [→ see the Case Study at right].

The recent increase in the number of teachers working for JICA’s volunteer programs contributes to the promotion of development education and international understanding education at schools as well as responds to foreign students studying in Japan. Today, all of the prefectural governments and the 20 major cities have a special program to encourage teachers to join JICA volunteer activities without losing their teaching positions, and a cumulative total of 1,139 teachers have been sent overseas up to fiscal 2016.

● **Volunteer Programs Contributing to Diverse Challenges in Development**

In addition to fighting diversifying development challenges by working together with JICA’s other projects and volunteer organizations of other countries, JICA volunteer programs encompass broad areas, from identification and formulation of needs to recruiting volunteers, screening, training, and activity support for every project stage of each support area and subject.

Specifically, volunteer needs for addressing development challenges in each country are refined and clarified based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit held in 2015, and formulated into concrete programs for each country and support area. Also, in response to the Sport for Tomorrow (SFT) international contribution program that the Government of Japan has been promoting for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, JICA

has been sending volunteers in the physical education and sports areas in order to communicate the value of practicing sports to people in developing countries. JICA also intends to share its knowledge and achievements with others and make them public by joining international volunteer conferences, working with the UN volunteer programs, and collaborating with the U.S. Peace Corps as well as other measures.

Case Study

Thailand: Private Sector Partnership Volunteer Program



Advancing Careers to the International Stage, Aiming for Win-Win Outcomes in Both International Cooperation and Business Performance

A company engaged in precision measurement, headquartered in Uji City, Kyoto, Japan, is still young, founded in 1989, and has only 79 employees. Prior to the launch of a new factory in Thailand, this company sent an employee to the country as a JOCV, taking advantage of JICA’s private sector partnership volunteer program. Sent to Thailand, he taught machine-tool operations and CAD-based design, as well as the 5S methods (sort, set in order, shine, standardize, and sustain), which are basic principles for the manufacturing business. Looking back on his volunteer experience, the volunteer says, “I have acquired the ability to act by thinking on my own. As a result of knowing the local people’s cultural background, I have also gained the capability to accept their mentality toward work and time, which is quite different from ours. It was a big advantage for me.” After completing his mission, he was sent to the Thai factory as scheduled, and has been working hard there.

The company manager who decided to use JICA’s private sector partnership volunteer program told of the advantages of the system, saying, “For a small enterprise like ours, it is truly tough to decide on sending an employee overseas, but we have found the volunteer has grown tremendously both in foreign language and communication abilities. It is also good for establishing a local human network. In JICA’s program, we can consult with JICA and propose the partner country and time period, and we can also receive partial support for wages. It is very good stimulation for other employees of the same generation.”

JICA’s volunteer program contributes both to the advancement of developing countries and to fostering Japanese personnel with international perspectives. There will be even more opportunities for international cooperation and business operations for further win-win results.



A Japanese volunteer gives instruction concerning machine-tool handling at an engineering college in Thailand.