

Volunteer Programs

Citizen-Based International Cooperation: Future Change Agent to Build a Better World

JICA's volunteer programs support activities by citizens who volunteer with high aspirations to cooperate in the economic and social development as well as the reconstruction of developing countries. The volunteer programs, namely Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs), 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. In recent years, the programs have been expected to act as a means to develop human resources for regional vitalization with global perspectives that are valuable to Japanese society.

● What Are JICA's Volunteer Programs?

Since its commencement of dispatching 29 JOCVs to five countries, namely Laos, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Kenya, in fiscal 1965, JICA has implemented volunteer programs for more than 50 years. Also, JICA has continuously updated its programs in response to changes of the times. As of the end of March 2018, JICA's volunteer program has the following modalities; (1) JOCVs for people between the ages of 20 and 39, (2) Senior Volunteers for people age 40 or older, (3) Youth and Senior *Nikkei* (Japanese Descendant) Communities Volunteers who are dispatched to contribute to the development of *Nikkei* communities, and (4) short-term volunteers less than one year assignment. All members of JICA volunteers, more than 52,000 people dispatched overseas (JOCVs account for more than 43,000), are engaged in different activities in assigned countries.

In light of the findings of the Autumn Administrative Program Review¹ for fiscal 2017, JICA has been reviewing the systems of the volunteer programs to better meet the needs of the times as public participation programs.

● Contributing to Human Resource Development for Japan and the World

JICA's volunteer programs have been highly recognized as they offer experiences to develop the skills of global human resources, such as problem solving, communications, and adapting to different cultures through their activities by living and working closely 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 with their experiences in welcoming diverse cultures and societies, being open to dialogue, and taking actions in a variety of settings. In fact, many returned JICA volunteers play an active role in their local communities, such as the internationalization of the community, developing child-rearing support programs, and post-earthquake reconstruction.

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



A JOCV supports the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility at a children's cultural center in Luang Prabang, Laos. She helped to revive a traditional puppet play that has been handed down from generation to generation in the region.

of job offers from private companies to volunteers who have returned home increased from 304 in 2009 to 1,925 in 2017. The number of authorities and organizations that have special employment quotas or preferential treatment for returned volunteers increased to 18 universities, 38 boards of education, and 68 local governments as of fiscal 2017.

● 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.

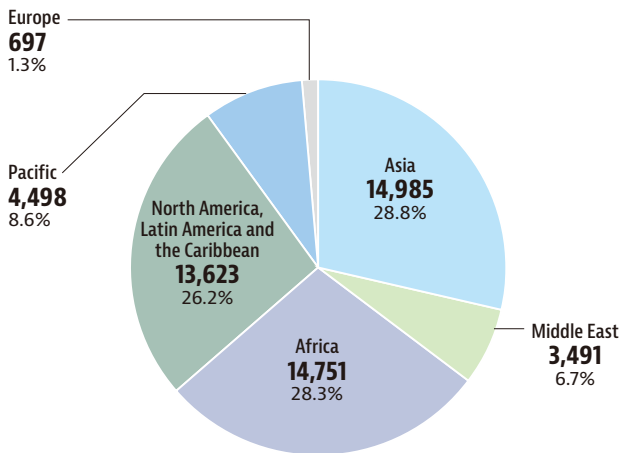
JICA's cooperation contributes not only to overcoming challenges faced by developing countries during the course of advancement but also to cultivating human resources for the business globalization intended by such entities. During fiscal 2017, there were 11 volunteers sent in partnership with local governments, 22 with the private sector, and 169 with universities.

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 in Japan as well as responds to foreign students studying in Japan. A total of 109 teachers were sent overseas in fiscal 2017.

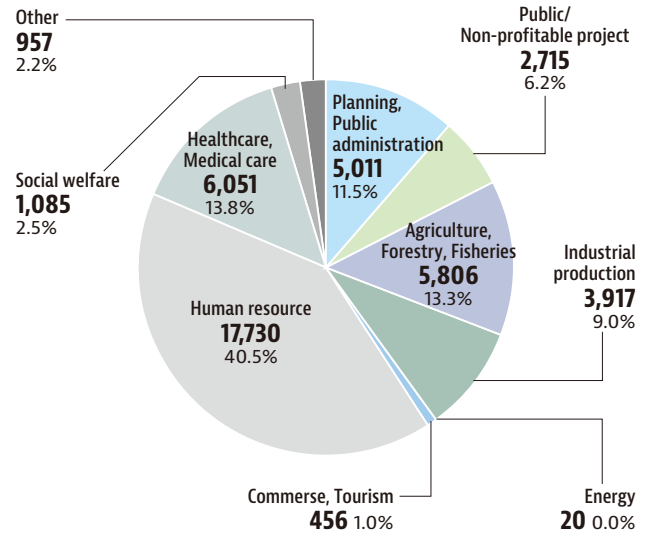
● Contribution to Diverse Development Agenda

To address a diversified development agenda, JICA's volunteer programs promote coordination with JICA's other projects and other volunteer organizations overseas. Also, the programs are designed to address development agendas at all stages, such as formulation of each program, selection of capable candidates, pre-dispatch training, and support for

Cumulative number of JICA Volunteers dispatched by region (as of March 2018)



Cumulative number of JOCVs dispatched by field of work (as of March 2018)



volunteer activities.

In Micronesia, for example, outstanding work has been done by JICA volunteers to raise public awareness on solid waste management based on the principle of 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) + Return² in close collaboration with JICA technical cooperation experts. In addition to awareness-raising activities in local schools and communities, they also offer training for people engaged in the construction and renovation of waste-disposal sites.

Such activities for 3R + Return has been spreading across the Pacific countries, such as Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, and Samoa. In Fiji, for example, 3R + Return was incorporated into environmental education activities at schools as the Clean School Program.

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 [→ see the Case Study below].

JICA also intends to share its knowledge and achievements with other volunteer sending organizations by participating in international volunteer conferences, working with the United Nations Volunteers programme and the U.S. Peace Corps.

1. A public review of government programs held with the participation of third-party experts under the auspices the Council on Administrative Reform.
2. The term "Return" here refers both to the return of organic waste to nature and the return of recyclables and hard-to-manage materials to recycling markets.

Botswana: Coaching Softball by a JOCV

Our Goal Is to Participate in the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020!



A member of the Botswana national team receives training from the JOCV.

The history of softball in Botswana dates back to the early 1970s, when the U.S. Peace Corps introduced this sport at a grassroots level. Now it is widely known as a national sport, with the number of players exceeding 40,000. Today, various softball league matches are held across the country.

Aiko Nakamura, a JOCV, serves as a technical coach to the national softball teams as well as teams of students and adults in Botswana. In January 2017, she was assigned as a coach to the Botswana Softball Association.

After her assignment, Botswana's national teams have made remarkable achievements. The men's national team made it to the

world quarter-finals, the highest rank in their history. The women's national team has also earned a ticket to the 2018 Women's Softball World Championship, to be held in Japan.

National team members say: "We owe a lot to her. She has changed us in many ways, and now our dream is to play at the Olympics." Her influence is not limited to technical improvement but also encourages members' advancing mindset, such as their sporting behavior. For example, they started to clean up the softball field after the match by their own will. They are very proud of being national members and give dreams and inspiration to the people of Botswana.