

# Citizen Participation

## Making International Cooperation a Part of Japanese Culture

JICA promotes and supports international cooperation activities by Japanese citizens. Through partnership with citizens, JICA aims to contribute to development issues with various approaches to promote understanding in international cooperation, and further to return the benefits of ties with developing countries to Japan's local communities.

Among these activities, partnerships with NGOs and other organizations, local governments, universities, and research institutions as well as support for development education are introduced below.

### Partnerships with NGOs and Other Organizations

JICA works to strengthen partnerships with NGOs through (1) dialogue, (2) cooperation, and (3) activity support.

#### 1. Dialogue

In fiscal 2018, JICA deepened discussions with NGOs and other organizations about a number of topics through the NGO-JICA Dialogue Meeting and other occasions. These topics included (1) how to improve the quality of JICA Partnership Program (JPP) projects, (2) how to promote cooperation between JICA volunteers and NGOs, etc. and (3) the Action Plan for Collaboration with JICA and Local Network NGOs. This process helped to confirm the directions and specifics of future partnership activities.

#### 2. Cooperation

JICA implements JPP projects jointly with Japanese organizations, including NGOs, by taking advantage of their expertise and experience in order to support the socioeconomic development of developing countries. In fiscal 2018, a total of 60 JPP projects were adopted. JICA also implemented 10 projects financed by the JICA Donation Fund for the People of the World, which receives donations from citizens, corporations, and groups.

#### 3. Activity Support

JICA offers institutional and capacity building training to NGOs and other organizations to enhance their project execution capabilities. It also operates the NGO-JICA Japan Desk in 20 countries to enhance cooperation between these organizations and JICA in the field.

### Partnerships with Local Governments

JICA is also engaged in activities that not only help developing countries but also serves to vitalize regional areas in Japan. A case in point is JICA's close cooperation with Japanese local governments—particularly important partners of JICA—in an effort to internationalize the regions, support overseas activities of local governments and industries, and encourage other related ventures, chiefly under the Local Government-Type JICA Partnership Program.



A JICA scholar majoring in mechanical system engineering

JICA's contribution to regional revitalization in Japan as well as to developing countries is highlighted by, for example, Tokachi Seika Co., Ltd., a confectionery manufacturer that participated in a project proposed by Obihiro City, Hokkaido. This company won the fiscal 2018 Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries Minister's Award for Overseas Promotion of Japanese Food as a business operator with excellent export performance [→ see the case study on page 55].

### Partnerships with Universities

As challenges faced by developing countries have become even more difficult and complicated, partnerships with universities are indispensable for proceeding with international cooperation initiatives because of their extensive and advanced knowledge. Partnerships between universities and JICA are put into practice through various approaches, ranging from the participation of faculty members in JICA's research projects and studies on assistance to comprehensive implementation of technical cooperation projects in developing countries.

JICA provides training opportunities for people from developing countries who will likely play a leadership role in their countries or contribute to solving some of the challenges there. To this end, JICA invites such people to study in master's or doctoral courses at Japanese universities as "JICA scholars" [→ see page 65 and the case study on page 73]. JICA has a comprehensive cooperation agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) with 36 universities in Japan to systematically promote and strengthen broad-based partnerships as described above.

JICA has recently been working on the strategic expansion of the acceptance of JICA scholars to ensure that those who have studied in Japan work hard as future leaders back home and, furthermore, maintain and strengthen friendly relations between Japan and their countries over the medium and long term.

### Activities to Scale up the Acceptance of JICA Scholars

In order to further streamline the administrative procedures

for accepting JICA scholars, JICA signed a separate MOU with 35 Japanese universities on the acceptance of them during fiscal 2018. Of these universities, 28 already began accepting JICA scholars under the MOU.

JICA offered the short-term introductory course titled "Understanding the Japanese Development Experience" to promote better understanding of the Japanese experience of modernization and economic development. It also teamed up with the Open University of Japan Foundation to produce a TV program aimed at communicating the steps modern Japan has taken for its development.

## To Promote Understanding of International Cooperation among Schoolchildren and General Citizens Programs for Supporting Development Education

### JICA Global Plaza

JICA's three Global Plazas—the JICA Global Plaza in Ichigaya, Tokyo; the Nagoya Global Plaza in Nagoya City, Aichi; and the Hokkaido Global Plaza in Sapporo City, Hokkaido—offer hands-on exhibitions that encourage seeing, listening, and touching. Visitors can receive explanations from "Global Concierges," who have abundant experience in international cooperation. These Global Plazas offer the opportunity to learn about the realities in developing countries and the challenges facing the global community as well as international development cooperation at work, while encouraging visitors to think about what they learned and even translate it into action. Offering events and seminars of various kinds, these plazas also serve as a forum for citizens' participation in international cooperation. Other domestic offices of JICA also provide a wide range of information on international cooperation for the public.

In fiscal 2018, the Global Plazas continued their efforts to promote the public understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, they held exhibitions



A class for development education and international understanding education on the SDGs opens students' eyes to the world

and seminars on the SDGs, attracting broad participation from private companies and local governments.

### For Promotion of Development Education at Schools

JICA conducts activities aimed at promoting development education at school. The idea is to foster the abilities of students and pupils to (1) understand how development challenges facing the world relate to Japan, (2) regard them as their own problems, (3) proactively study them, and (4) participate in efforts to overcome them.

JICA, with its expertise, information, and human resources in international cooperation, has an ever increasingly larger role to play in classroom settings amid two major developments. First, concrete progress has been made in the effort to foster creators of a sustainable society as called for in the New National Curriculum Standards, which will come into effect in fiscal 2020. Second, various actions are now being taken in Japanese society to help achieve the SDGs.

In light of these circumstances, JICA worked with local governments, teachers and school administrators, and NGOs to (1) develop teaching materials on the SDGs for students and pupils, (2) organize training sessions and seminars for teachers in a bid to reach a wider audience for development education, and (3) make on-demand-delivery of lectures for students.

**Thailand and Malaysia: Project for Industrial Advancement and Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)  
by Regional Branding through Food Valley Tokachi and Halal Correspondence under the JICA Partnership Program (JPP)**

## Participating company wins the Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries Minister's Award for Overseas Promotion of Japanese Food



Tokachi Seika President Hiroyuki Komano and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Takamori Yoshikawa at the commendation ceremony

Launched in 2016, this project assisted the food industry in Thailand and Malaysia in strengthening market competitiveness and establishing local brands by leveraging the comprehensive expertise developed in the Tokachi region of Hokkaido, Japan, that covers everything from production to sales.

Prompted by this cooperation project, some Japanese companies have already begun their attempts at exporting their products to rapidly expanding markets overseas. Standing out among the participating companies is Tokachi Seika Co., Ltd., based in Nakasatsunai Village, Hokkaido. This company began producing halal *daifuku* (rice cakes stuffed with sweet bean jam) and *gyoza* dumplings in Malaysia and exporting

traditional Japanese confectionery made in Tokachi. It has made its plant in Tokachi halal compatible, winning halal certification from the Malaysian government.

Because of these activities, the company received the Fiscal 2018 Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries Minister's Award for Overseas Promotion of Japanese Food for business operators with excellent export performance.

The project has promoted other new activities in Japan. The Obihiro Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for example, has hired a highly skilled Malaysian in Japan to help member companies with their business expansion to the country and to make their products and processes halal compatible.