

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. These time-honored programs—which include Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs), founded in 1965—are widely recognized as a good example of grassroots-level international cooperation extended by the Japanese government and JICA, and are highly praised by partner countries. In recent years, the programs' participants have been increasingly valued in Japan for their contribution to internationalization and vitalization of 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. By the end of March 2020, some 54,000 JICA volunteers (including more than 45,000 JOCVs) have engaged in different activities in the developing world as Japanese conspicuous contributors to the international community.

In fiscal 2019, JICA reformed the existing system of dispatching volunteers, replacing the two age-based categories with two new categories for soliciting applications: (1) the *general category*, which covers a wide range of fields of work for many different projects; and (2) the *senior category*, for experts with a certain level of experience and skills for selected projects. JICA sends various types of JICA volunteers to partner countries. These include (1) JOCVs, (2) Senior Volunteers, (3) JOCVs and Senior Volunteers for *Nikkei* Communities, and (4) short-term volunteers whose assignment duration ranges from one month to less than one year. The first two types constitute a majority of JICA volunteers.

Contributing to Human Resources Development for Japan and the World

In recent years, high regard has been given—in terms of human resources development—to the experiences of JOCVs who have lived with local people and worked with them to solve or ameliorate problems in a society and culture different from those of Japan.

Former JOCVs are given an active role to play in social globalization in Japan and abroad and regional vitalization at home as talent who are capable of out-of-the-box thinking in a new environment, collaborating successfully with people around them, and taking the lead in making new attempts. The JICA volunteer programs are thus attracting attention as an undertaking that serves to “energize Japan and the world.”

The number of job offers from private companies etc. to former JOCVs totaled 1,341 in fiscal 2019. A number of local governments and boards of education offer former JOCVs a special



Papua New Guinea: A JOCV in community development working to increase income through vegetable cultivation
(Photo: Hiroshi Wada)

employment quota and other kinds of preferential treatment in the screening process. In fiscal 2019, 81 local governments, 37 boards of education, 19 graduate schools, and one university were confirmed to have offered such preferential treatment.

Enhancing Cooperation with Various Partners in Japan

To make use of the technologies and knowledge of domestic partners, including local governments, the 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 developing human resources for the global business development intended by such entities. During fiscal 2019, there were 10 volunteers sent in partnership with local governments, 13 with the private sector, and 153 with universities.

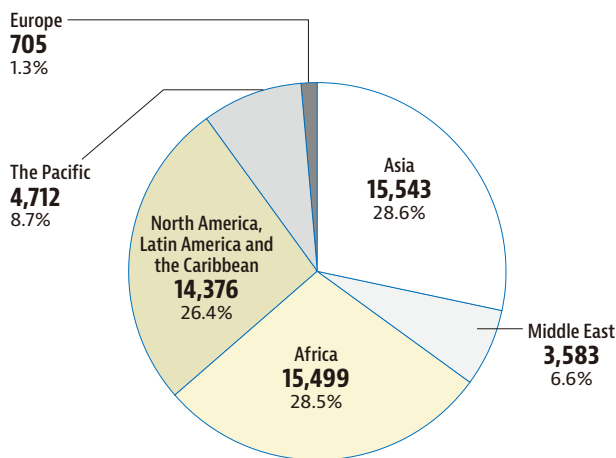
The participation of in-service school teachers in JICA's volunteer programs has a favorable impact on school education in Japan; the experience proves to be useful in promoting development education and international understanding education, and accommodating foreign students. A total of 125 teachers from public schools were sent overseas in fiscal 2019.

Contribution to a 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 volunteer activities.

For example, JICA started to send a team of JOCVs for mathematics education to Guatemala in 2010. They have been

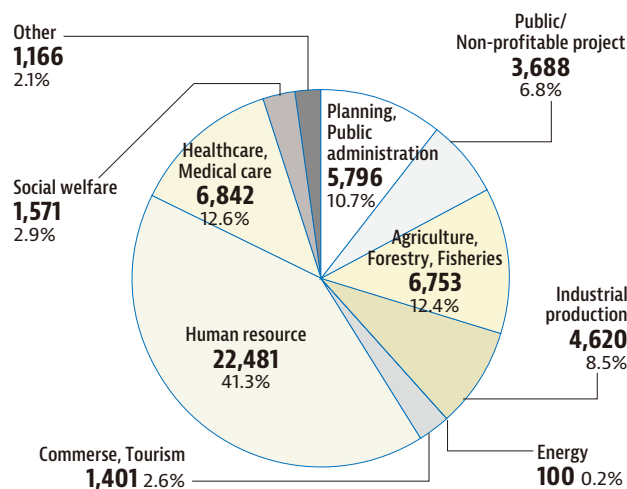
Cumulative number of JICA volunteers dispatched by region (as of March 2020)



working to improve mathematics classes by making good use of the national textbook *Guatemala*, a major output of JICA's earlier technical cooperation project in the country. In fiscal 2019, these JOCVs offered 227 training and lesson study sessions to 1,779 local teachers and practice teachers. From February to March 2020, a national newspaper carried some of the exercises meant for fourth to sixth graders contained in *Guatemala* a total of 15 times, indicating that Japan's assistance in mathematics education was attracting attention.

From fiscal 2008 through fiscal 2019, JICA dispatched more than 270 JOCVs to 21 countries as part of the Water Security Action Team (W-SAT). The Japanese government announced the establishment of W-SAT at the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) in 2008 to improve access to safe water and sanitation in Africa. During fiscal 2019, 28 W-SAT members conducted a wide range of activities in eight countries. These activities included

Cumulative number of JICA volunteers dispatched by field of work (as of March 2020)



(1) supporting water-management associations for securing safe water as well as operating and maintaining water supply facilities; (2) encouraging the securing of safe water through assistance in increasing the income of residents; and (3) improving public health by offering guidance on hand-washing in schools and communities.

Toward the Sport for Tomorrow (SFT) international contribution program that the Japanese government has been promoting for the 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.

As of September 2020, JICA has had JOCVs return to Japan due to the impact of the spread of COVID-19; however, JICA is considering the possibility of sending them back in light of the situations in the countries and regions of their assignment.

Bolivia: A JOCV in Public Health Nursing at Work

Developing a health guidance pamphlet for encouraging indigenous people to prevent lifestyle diseases



The JOCV (center) using the pamphlet for explanation purposes

Many indigenous people in Bolivia fail to notice their own lifestyle diseases, most notably diabetes and obesity.

This problem was of special concern to a JOCV in public health nursing who was working in an area home to many indigenous people. In cooperation with her colleagues in her assigned region, this JOCV developed an effective health guidance pamphlet with a strong impact to encourage these people to take a second look at their lifestyles with a view to preventing diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity among them. Using this pamphlet, she held several seminars, which proved to be effective. Some of the indigenous people who attended changed

their lifestyles accordingly.

Under the auspices of the Mother and Child Health Network Improvement Project in Oruro, a JICA technical cooperation project underway in her assigned region of Bolivia, the JOCV made a presentation of the pamphlet in front of health ministry officials, who expressed strong interest and praised her effort. Her activities have had a favorable ripple effect. Intentions were expressed to use the pamphlet for health guidance from a lifestyle perspective in all departments of Bolivia. The Bolivian government also made a fresh request for additional JOCVs in the health sector.