The merger of JICA and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, JBIC, is a great news for the world. The merger is one of the world’s largest bilateral development agencies that provides huge relief to the multi-faceted needs of the world and countries where JICA operates.

As part of the realignment, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and part of the grant aid provided by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) are integrated with the technical cooperation by JICA.

New JICA will thus provide comprehensive assistance for developing countries by making the most of a broader range of aid instruments in an effective and efficient manner spanning a network of 100 overseas offices around the world.

JICA Ghana, being a partner in the development process of Ghana, is empowered more, to provide additional support and assistance to the people and government of Ghana.

JICA Ghana is supporting various sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, industry, health and education in Ghana; the merger of JICA and JBIC will help achieve that aim in a more rewarding way.

New JICA will provide support for human resources development, capacity building, policy and institutional improvements, and provision of social and economic infrastructure, thereby pursuing sustained poverty reduction through equitable growth.

Chief Representative’s Remark

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GHANA & JAPAN NETWORK EVENT IN KUMASI: A JICA AND JOCV GESTURE

The extant unity and cooperation between Ghana and Japan received a commendable boost, 1st August, when JICA and JOCV networked with their Ghanaian counterparts in an elaborate cross-cultural and educative exchange in the serene city of Kumasi.

JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency and JOCV, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers put together the first-ever Ghana and Japan Network Event to throw more light on the activities of JICA and JOCV in Ghana under the theme: 'Building Bright Future through Culture and Education'.

Since 1977 when the Government of Ghana and Japan signed agreements to establish JOCV in Ghana, more than 900 Japanese volunteers have been dispatched to Ghana, volunteering to work in areas relating to Health, Education, Good Governance and Agriculture. They are mostly dispatched to work all over Ghana, especially in the hinterlands, where access to safe health and qualitative education is a great challenge.

At the Network Event in Kumasi (State Boys JHS, Bantama), many cross-cultural exchanges took place; Ghanaians learnt Japanese songs and dances, watched a film show on the Atomic Bomb that affected Japan, played amputees soccer, took free and mobile VCT (Voluntary Counselling Test to determine HIV status), networked with Japanese, while their Japanese counterpart learnt Ghanaian traditional songs and dances and networked with the Ghanaian community.

There was a mini-exhibition to showcase JICA and JOCV activities in Ghana and how simple environmental wastes could be converted into other useful items. A Ghanaian lady, Maria Halidu, student of the Kumasi Polytechnic commented, 'The Japanese are fond of making good things out of things we considered insignificant and useless. They showed me how to make a nice bag and pocket purse from 'pure water' sachets. It is amazing that the bag is nice and can carry loads.'

In his short speech, Mr. Kunihito Yamauchi, Chief Representative of JICA Ghana, reiterated the unity and cooperation that exist between Ghana and Japan and pledged a continued support from Japan to help Ghana in JOCV's primary areas namely: education, health, agriculture and good governance.

Mika Nanko, a Japanese Volunteer and the main organiser of the programme, commended Ghanaians as peaceful, loving and fast-developing people, but added that more attention should be given to amputees and people living with HIV/AIDS in Ghana, because, 'They are capable of doing everything that normal people do, if they are given the opportunity and are not stigmatised or discriminated against'.

Mr. Kunihito Yamauchi, Mr. Apraku Opoku Fufie, Nkawie Head, PPAG, Mr. Obiri Yeboah, Head, States Boys JHS, Mr. Abdul Aziz Mohammed, National President of the Amputee Soccer Association, Mr. Frank Amaning from Marie Stopes and a representative of the Batamahene, among other dignitaries, graced the historic occasion.

JICA Ghana is committed to serving the people of Japan and Ghana, as a bridge to advance international cooperation through sharing of knowledge and experience and working to build a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Report filed by J.K.O-Williams, JICA PR Advisor

The merger is one of the world’s largest bilateral development agencies that provides huge relief to the multi-faceted needs of the world and countries where JICA operates.

The merger also comes at what Mrs. Ogata called a ‘crossroads’ in Japan’s development assistance.

As part of the realignment, the Overseas Economic Cooperation of Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and part of the grant aid provided by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) are integrated with the technical cooperation by JICA.

As an aid donor agency, the ‘New JICA’ will provide technical cooperation, concessionary loans and grant aid in a more integrated fashion.

Technical Cooperation: Assistance extended to developing countries by dispatch of experts and volunteers, acceptance of trainees, various surveys, etc.

Official Development Assistance, ODA loans: Concessionary loans to developing countries.

Grant aid: Financial assistance extended to developing countries without an obligation of repayment.

JICA President Mrs. Sadako Ogata, who heads the expanded organization, said, "This decision marks a major historical turning point, not only for JICA, but also for Japan’s ODA."

In the 1990s, Japan was the world’s single biggest bilateral donor, but in the last decade, the country’s ODA has fallen by 40% because of prolonged economic recession and need for fiscal reform. Noting that Japan had now fallen behind the United States and several European countries in overall assistance, Mrs. Ogata said this trend needed to be reversed.

The world is also facing new challenges such as climate change, increasing environmental degradation and a global food crisis, and Mrs. Ogata said ‘New JICA’ must continue to evolve policies and projects to meet those new problems.

JICA has also emphasized increased help for Africa’s 900 million people and recently announced two major programs to help double that continent’s rice production within 10 years and train some 100,000 local health care workers to tackle one of Africa’s most serious problems, the morbidity rate among pregnant women, new mothers and their children. At the same time, JICA is contributing to double ODA in Africa by 2012.

New JICA intends to significantly expand basic research into developmental issues, strengthen ties with other international donors and actively promote greater private participation in development projects.

Going forward, Mrs. Ogata said, New JICA will work on the principle of the three SSSs—speed up, scale up and spread out:

1. Speeding up the overall aid process from project identification to implementation;
2. Scaling up pilot projects into highly effective programs and
3. Spreading out our current activities meaning closer cooperation with agencies such as the World Bank and ensuring that projects produce effective results such as job creation.

JICA Ghana is committed to serving the people of Japan and Ghana, as a bridge to advance international cooperation through sharing of knowledge and experience and working to build a more peaceful and prosperous world.
Volunteers Report

JAPAN OVERSEAS COOPERATION
VOLUNTEERS NUMBER REACHES 1,000

On Tuesday, 23rd September, 2008, with the dispatch of nine (9) new volunteers to Ghana, the total number of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) and Senior Overseas Volunteers, deployed to Ghana since 1977, reached a historic 1000 volunteers.

On 17th August, 1977, the first batch of volunteers was dispatched to Ghana. The batch had seven (7) Science and Mathematics teachers, one (1) Vegetable-growing volunteer and one (1) Rice Cultivation volunteer. The batch was dispatched after exchange of notes paved way between the Governments of Ghana and Japan for the establishment of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in Ghana. The agreement was signed on 17th February, 1977.

Thirty one (31) years up the ladder, the number of volunteers dispatched to Ghana has reached a commendable 1000 volunteers.

As a scheme of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), JOCV members in Ghana have been assigned to work in different communities all over the country to match the needs and requirements of each region, especially the highly deprived areas. They assist in areas such as Health and Education. They perform specific tasks that help to improve Ghana’s educational system by teaching subjects like Science and Mathematics, Primary Education, Computer Technology, Hydro Engineering, Automobile Engineering, Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, etc. They also engage in activities that result in Youth, Sports and Community Development, HIV and AIDS Control, Infectious Diseases Control and acquisition of Vocational Training Skills (Dressmaking, Handicrafts, Design, Carpenter, Computer Instructor, etc.). Currently, there are over 100 professional Japanese volunteers working to support the development of Ghana.

New JICA will make full use of Japan’s experience and technologies as it works in concert with international society to address the various globalization-related issues developing countries face in a comprehensive manner.

SMEs Project Report

JICA has identified the marketability of Shea and based on past experiences, JICA selected Shea as one of the four target commodities in its Local Industry Development Study project in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, PSD and PSI. The outcome of this project was a Masterplan for the local industry promotion. JICA’s research analyzed the quality of currently produced Shea butter in Ghana, learnt various standards of customer’s demands and eventually prepared the quality improvement procedure that will fill in the quality gap.

This quality improvement procedure resulted in a Shea Butter Production Manual for the local Shea butter industry. This manual has since been developed by JICA’s Local Industry Study Team and is available for stakeholders in the shea butter industry.

The UNDP/Japan Shea butter partnered in a project which was titled ‘Empowering Rural Women and Alleviating Poverty by strengthening the Local Shea Butter Industry in Northern Ghana’. Other partners were Africa 2000 Network and AFRASIA. The objective of this project was empowering rural women in Northern Ghana and alleviating their acute poverty by reinforcing the feasibility of local Shea butter industry as a sustainable business.