On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of commencement of diplomatic relation and the 40th anniversary of commencement of economic relation between Japan and Jordan, the President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) H.E. Dr. Akihiko TANAKA visited Jordan from 18-20 July. During his three-day visit to Jordan, Dr. TANAKA met with Prime Minister H.E. Dr. ENSOUR, Minister of Finance H.E. Dr. TOUKAN, and Secretary General of Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation) H.E. Dr. AL-KHARABSHEH and visited Za’tari Camp for the Syrian refugees and Baqa’a Refugees Camp for Palestinians.

At the Joint Press Conference held with the Secretary General of MOPIC, Dr. TANAKA confirmed the important role of Jordan for the peace and the stability in the Middle East Region, and mentioned Japanese technical and financial supports to Jordan in various areas of water supply, electricity, health and education, livelihood of Palestinians refugees, welfare for the people with disabilities, promotion of employment, as well as strengthening regional cooperation among neighboring Arab countries.

Dr. AL-KHARABSHEH mentioned the friendship between the two countries in last 60 years and that both countries are working together to tackle the situation that Jordan is currently facing because of influx of huge number of the Syrian refugees, and JICA and MOPIC agreed of Development Policy Loan with 120 million dollars in last March, and Grant Aid with total amount of 25 million dollars for water projects in northern governorates affected by Syrian refugees.

Moreover, and in order to promote self-reliant and sustainable economic growth, the construction of the Petra Museum will start soon as a Grant Aid project to attract more tourist from abroad. JICA will also support the career education at universities and will invite 14 Jordanian officials from related organizations to Japan on August aiming at improving employment of high-educated youth.

It is worth mentioning that Japan has supported Jordan with 3.8 billion dollars till now, including training for more than 2,200 Jordanians in Japan, dispatched more than 1,400 experts and volunteers to Jordan, and Dr. TANAKA showed his intention to continue support Jordan.
Message from the Chief Representative-JICA Jordan Office
By: Shokichi Sakata

60 years have passed since the diplomatic relation between Jordan and Japan was established in 1954. From that time on the government of Japan extended various assistances to Jordan. The records first mention a training program held in Japan in 1965, followed by the Yen loan started from 1974, the technical Cooperation Project started in 1977, and the grant aid project started in 1979. During this history, JICA Jordan office was established in 1991. These preceding 40 years JICA has contributed to the development of Jordan in various areas and enhanced the relationship between Jordan and Japan. Now, Jordan contributes countries by implementing third country trainings with JICA, in the field of agriculture, electricity, education and so on. Jordan is blessed with many cultural heritages such as Petra’s historical remains, the Roman Theater in Amman, Salt city of the old capital with its attractive town scape, as well as great nature such as the beautiful Red Sea in Aqaba and the Dead Sea. In addition, Wadi Rum is the place mixed with great desert nature and ancient history. Thus Jordan possesses tourism resources, tourism is a potential industry in Jordan. Therefore employment expansion and economic growth are expected with tourism development. JICA is proceeding with projects in this potential area, which are the establishment of the National Museum and Petra Museum, Salt city tourism development projects and others.

On the other hand, since there are refugees in Jordan from neighboring countries, host communities face difficulties because of shortages of public utilities due to the rapid population increase. In these situations, the Japanese government and JICA have supported the host communities by providing medical equipment and educational equipment, and will also add support by improving drinking water supply facilities.

Including the above mentioned cooperation, JICA will focus on some of the major issues in Jordan as followings; (1) Improvement of Social and Economic Infrastructure and Related Human Capacity for Self-reliance and Sustainable Economic Development, (2) Alleviation of Social Gaps, (3) Regional Cooperation.

In order to realize JICA’s vision “Inclusive and Dynamic Development” in Jordan, JICA will think through and cope with the issues together with Jordanian people.
As JICA has provided in last March its latest loan to Jordan “Fiscal Consolidation and Development Policy” Loan which came in parallel financing with the World Bank in their Development Policy Loan (DPL), JICA and the World Bank shared the same matrix of DPL triggers given the fact that one of the three pillars of this DPL is on improving Jordan’s public debt and general budget management, JICA in parallel to this operation extended the training course “Public Debt Management Capacity Development”.

The training course which was a custom design training programme for the concerned stakeholders within the Government of Jordan which are the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Jordan and the General Budget Department. 17 officials from these three organizations joined the training that was divided into two phases; the first in Jordan in the period from January – February 2014 on Excel, and the second in Japan during the month of March, on various issues such as macroeconomy, debt sustainability analysis, debt management performance assessment, forecasting GDP and inflation, analysis of risk performance management, debt and risk analysis, and Japan’s monetary policy.

To be more focused and have greater impact on end beneficiaries, the training in Japan after finishing the above general topics, divided the 17 participants into two groups according to the specialized sessions they received later; the first group received training on Islamic financing and Sukuk (Islamic bonds), hedging, and current situation of global markets, while the second group received training on cash management, governmental accounting management, public expenditure management, and performance management.

To enhance their exposure and understanding of the Japanese experience, participants were taken into visits to related Japanese organizations such as the Ministry of Finance, Bank of Japan, and Mizuho Bank. Lecturers also varied from professors from Japanese Universities such Meiji University and Chiba Keizai University, to professors and officials from the Japanese Ministry of Finance, Bank of Japan, and the World Bank.

Upon their return to Jordan, and in order to generalize the benefits from this training course, trainees held individual and collective presentations to their colleagues in their respected ministries and organizations, and JICA was invited to attend these training courses, and it was observed the high level of interaction and discussions that followed each presentation, which were reflection to the level of benefit participants had gained from the training and their readiness to disseminate knowledge.
Second school semester activities for JOCV

By : Sawsan Haddad  -  Program officer at JICA JORDAN Office

JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) volunteers and UNRWA art teachers held an art exhibition during May 2014 at Al Shmeisani Al Thaqafeh st. The title of the 3rd Art Exhibition of UNRWA schools is “Welcome to our world”. The art works are created by students in UNRWA schools where JICA Volunteers are currently working in Baqa, Hoson and Wihdat camps beside Taybeh school in Taybeh area and Karama boys school joined for the first time.

Some works aim to show collaboration work of many students from a variety of classes or even different schools. The volunteers aimed to show people outside UNRWA society the exhibition that expresses the students art work through appreciation, encouragement and cooperate in writing their feedback and remarks on the registration sheet.

As a part of the annual plan of the volunteers activities at UNRWA schools in Jordan; volunteers conducted the Smile Cup sports event (for girls) and the Samurai Cup (for boys), these events are conducted in (Education Development Center) in Al Mugabalein area south Amman. The events are usually conducted separately a day for girls and a day for boys. These activities aim to enhance the contents of the physical education classes and enrich the children’s self-confidence and collaboration work. The Smile Cup was conducted on the 18th of May 2014. Participating schools were Baqa No.3, Taibeh No.1 Jorfeh and Talbieh. As for the Samurai Cup, it was conducted on the 14th of May and the participating schools were Al-Hami and Al – Es-kan schools from Irbid, Karama and Wihdat No.3. The results of the two activities were positive and achieved its main goals through involving the biggest number of students to play together in a respectful manner towards other players, the judges and the rules of the game. Students managed to play in as a team.

Music Stars is also a major event that is annually conducted. This event reflects the progress of the students in learning music and understanding the importance of performing in a musical event that shows the progress of the students who studied music with the volunteers. Teachers and students came to know that music is important for the development of the human mind and character in a positive manner. The Music stars event was conducted on the 27th of February and the participating schools were Nuzha No.2, Baqa’a No.2 and Hashimi No.1.

Kindergarten volunteers were working to spread awareness among the KG teachers, supervisors and Ministry of Education staff through conducting workshops in the governorates and in the Ministry of Planning. Workshops were conducted during April and May 2014. Volunteers introduced effective methods of communication between teachers and students; they also introduced very simple art work that can be easily applied inside the classroom involving students.

Generally speaking, the events conducted and performed by the Japanese volunteers need a lot of effort, planning, preparation and explanation. Fortunately their activities are appreciated by their counter parts and their schools under UNRWA or Ministry of Education.