Leading from front

JICA Senior Volunteer was the key person in holding the National Licensure Examination for Nurses in Nepal

- Santosh Chhetri

Nepal’s long dream to conduct the National Licensure Examination for Nurses (NLEN) finally came true, thanks to JICA Senior Volunteer Kei Miyamoto, who worked behind the scenes and away from public being a catalyst. An eager beaver Miyamoto, also a registered Japanese nurse, had a great yearning for this exam (that checks whether nurses are capable to practice nursing in a best possible way) from the first day she started working in this Himalayan country.

The country’s first NLEN was conducted by the Nepal Nursing Council (NNC), an autonomous body entrusted with regulating the nursing sector. Coincidentally, the exam passed off successfully the same year Miyamoto is leaving Nepal completing her two-year assignment that started in 2010.

When Nepal’s authorities knew that Japan was the first country to hold the Licensure Examination for Nurses in 1950 they had also aspired to conduct this exam. The NNC in 2007 had decided to hold NLEN at the end of 2009, but the plan was put on hold by the political change during that time. Later on, when Daya Laxmi Joshi (Vaidya) became the NNC President for the second term in 2011, the Nursing Council again reached a conclusion to hold NLEN as soon as possible. Miyamoto with plenty of fire in her belly and a small team of NNC officials worked hard to conduct this exam. Their eight-month-long efforts yielded results and finally the first NLEN was conducted on May 11. JICA Nepal also provided logistic support to NNC such as computers, printers and other IT equipment worth around Rs 1.4 million to conduct the NLEN that attaches a lot of importance to the country’s nursing sector.

Miyamoto’s main roles were designing the national licensure examination, drafting relevant policies and providing information about the systems adopted by other countries to control the quality of nursing and the certification process applied abroad. Under her aegis and tight schedule, the first edition of the National Licensure Examination Guidelines-2012 was prepared. She also strained every nerve to activate the tradition-oriented committees and the administrative section of NNC. Thrilled at the introduction of Licensure Exam in Nepal, Miyamoto says she is hopeful now that the Nepali nurses who stand on a par with their foreign colleagues in many areas will deliver the best care possible to patients.

(Mr Chhetri is Public Relations Officer of JICA Nepal)
The School Health and Nutrition (SHN) basic package program developed by the School Health and Nutrition Project (SHNP) is being implemented in the government’s existing system. Completed in May, the SHNP was launched in 2008 in accordance with an agreement between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Government of Nepal (GoN) to support the implementation of “National School Health and Nutrition (NSHN) Strategy”, which was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2006.

The SHNP has developed the SHN Guideline and implemented the SHN basic package program at public schools in the two districts in accordance with the NSHN Strategy. The SHNP basic packages covers SHN services program (de-worming, use of first aid kit, physical check-up, mid-day meal); behavior change program (SHN check-list, celebration of SHN week); child participation (child club mobilization); and system development program (SHN action plan and monitoring and supervision). Counterparts and schools teachers are directly involved in SHN activities based on the “learning by doing approach”. Such approach is one of the factors that contributed to smooth implementation of the SHNP. With the termination of the project, there is an utter need to expand its achievements as per importance coping up with several institutional issues such as development of the legal framework of the SHN program.

The NSHN Strategy focuses on improvement of health and nutrition status of school-aged children and communities with utilizing schools as the places where school health activities are implemented. To strengthen implementation system of this strategy in the MoHP and the MoE, the SHNP worked for the improvement of health and nutrition status of school-aged children in the two districts—Sindhupalchowk and Syangja for 4 years. The total coverage and beneficiaries are shown in the table.

With the successful completion of the project, I strongly hope that the concerned government authorities and other stakeholders will continuously work together and make follow-up on these issues towards the institutionalization of the SHN Program.

The Joint Action Plan developed by the concerned departments under the Ministry of Health and Population and Ministry of Education are expected to be effectively implemented in the days ahead. The best practices or models of SHNP will surely be further scaled up in the wider areas in strong leadership of both the ministries with the support of all stakeholders.

(Mr. Lamsal is Program Officer of JICA Nepal)

### Table 1: SHNP coverage by year, district, number of schools and students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1st year (2008/09)</th>
<th>II year (2009/10)</th>
<th>III year (2010/11)</th>
<th>IV year (2011/12)</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sindhupalchowk</td>
<td>3 VDCs</td>
<td>3+3 VDCs</td>
<td>6+9 VDCs</td>
<td>All (79) VDCs</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>111,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syangja</td>
<td>3 VDCs</td>
<td>3+3 VDCs</td>
<td>6+9 VDCs</td>
<td>All (60) VDCs</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>87,701</td>
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The increase in the number of vehicles has caused severe traffic congestions in the Kathmandu Valley. Traffic jam is one of the most serious problems faced by people living the Capital city. In order to identify main traffic issues and problems in the Valley, the Government of Nepal requested the Government of Japan to carry out a data collection survey within the framework of the previous “Master Plan for Kathmandu Valley Urban Development” formulated by the JICA in 1993.

In response, JICA agreed and started “Data Collection Survey on Traffic Improvement in Kathmandu Valley” in November last year. The survey work covering three districts and five municipalities of the Valley is going on at present in accordance with the schedule. The final report will be submitted to the Department of Roads at the end of July this year.

According to preliminary findings of the survey, increase of population density of Kathmandu is remarkable compared to Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. The Census 2011 says the population of Kathmandu constitutes 69.3% of the total population of the Kathmandu Valley, while Bhaktapur and Lalitpur account for 12.1% and 18.6%, respectively. The road density per square km of Lalitpur is very low compared to Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. However, the road density per 1,000 persons of Lalitpur is the same level of the other two districts.

As part of the survey, Household Interview, Traffic Count and Bus Passenger Interview Surveys were conducted. As many as 18,100 households were interviewed between December 2011 and January 2012. The survey showed that the number of travel mode in the Valley has doubled in the past 20 years. Traffic Survey revealed that river crossing capacities of Bagmati, Bishnumati and Dhobi Khola are insufficient and additional bridges are required. During Passenger Interview Survey passengers departing from Old Bus Park and Gongabu Bus Park were interviewed. Interview items were personal information such as age, occupation, trip purpose, origin and destination, access mode, bus fare and requirement for bus service improvement.

Since there is no railway system in the Valley, buses, minibuses, microbuses and tempos are the main public transport. The service level of buses, however, is very low against the growing demand. The main concerns of passengers are time, fare, safety and comfort.

On the other hand, the land use survey result showed that the population density in most of the areas inside the Ring Road jumped to more than 160 per hectare. In 1991, major population settlement was within the Ring Road. Population density outside the Ring Road also went high by over 80 per hectare.

(Compiled by Mr Santosh Chhetri)
JICA’s New President gives his first official interview since assuming office in April. Excerpts:

Question: Has it been difficult to make the transition from academia to the presidency of Japan’s development agency?

Answer: For me personally it has been quite smooth. I have worked for many years in international affairs and following the end of the cold war, I wrote several books dealing with overall trends towards globalization, the relative decline of sovereign states and the increasing power of other stakeholders; problems facing some ‘middle income’ countries including the rise of nationalism; and the status of so-called ‘fragile states’ facing or undergoing conflict. These are all problems which JICA confronts daily in its development work. Coming up with solutions will be the difficult part.

Q: JICA is already involved in many of these countries and areas. How do you propose to push the agenda forward?

A: I would like to encourage my staff to develop new innovative approaches based on the broad outlines established by my predecessor, Madame Ogata, including the concept of ‘inclusive and dynamic development’ and an emphasis on ‘human security’. That means not only ensuring state security, which is very important, but also strengthening the capacity and increased participation of communities and individuals in shaping their own future.

Q: What are your immediate priorities?

A: As an academic perhaps I became too bookish. I need to rectify that, to expose myself to the real fields of development assistance and see whether my hypothetical assumptions fit with reality. I need to make a reality check.

Q: Do you foresee any major changes in direction or emphasis for JICA?

A: Our current vision of ‘inclusive and dynamic development’ is the right one so we don’t need to change that. Probably what I would like to establish on top of that foundation is a sort of higher architecture of innovative ideas, expanding the use of science and our cumulative experience.

Q: What has been the impact of JICA’s major 2008 reorganization when it integrated with part of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)?

A: For the first time JICA can now offer technical cooperation, grant aid and ODA (Official Development Assistance)/concessional loans. Previously, looking at it from the outside, there were tendencies for these three different schemes to function separately without much concern for overall effectiveness. The challenge now is to integrate these different approaches creating innovative schemes to achieve the best mix of assistance.

Q: You have already mentioned publicly the need to establish new intellectual frameworks. What do you mean by that?

A: JICA has accumulated decades of field, administrative and intellectual experience. We should exploit this vast ‘knowledge bank’ in helping to shape ‘intellectual frameworks’ at various levels: to guide JICA staff in their work and to influence the development debate at the global level. JICA cannot do everything under the sun and we will not dominate these discussions but we must be very active participants with traditional partners such as the World Bank. What JICA has already done can also be very useful to emerging donor nations such as China, South Korea, Thailand, India and Brazil.

Q: Do you worry that the role of Japan and JICA has been undervalued or misunderstood?

A: Perhaps we Japanese are too accustomed to understatement. But in recent years there has been little academic study of Japan’s ODA. I would like to encourage both Japanese and international researchers to analyze our work more thoroughly and we can then create new theories based on our past experiences and what has worked and what has not worked.
**Q:** You are interested in the expanded application of science in development issues?

**A:** This is a very exciting and fascinating area for me, the engagement of academics in various scientific disciplines. The basic working assumption has always been that the developed world has the scientific knowledge and then it is a simple process of scientific transfer. I would like to see scientists from Japan and developing countries working closely together, exchanging ideas and developing appropriate programs based on mutual knowledge. The science and technology research partnership for sustainable development (SATREPS) launched by JICA in 2008 is one of the most promising approaches in this field.

**Q:** The budget for Japan’s Official Development Assistance has been falling for several years. What is the situation at the beginning of your presidency?

**A:** I hope that the annual reductions have bottomed out. My understanding is that the public’s view about foreign assistance expressed in opinion polls has gone up slightly, particularly after the march 11, 2011 earthquake when quite a number of Japanese realized you cannot live in isolation. We must take into consideration Japan’s current difficult financial situation but the ‘bottoming out’ process is very significant and I hope the government will now ‘positively’ increase the budget.

**Q:** Ultimately the Japanese taxpayer will decide the future direction of ODA. How do you propose to convince them that foreign assistance is important?

**A:** Our regional centers throughout the country will increase their contacts with local communities. Each year we invite some 10,000 trainees from the developing world to Japan and this provides an excellent opportunity for both sides to get to know each other. We have sent more than 40,000 people overseas as JICA volunteers and when they return home they should interact with schools and local communities. Importantly, the over 65s will soon comprise one quarter of the country’s population and they are the most active voters. Unless we can maintain their understanding and support, it will be difficult to persuade our MPs to increase the ODA budget.

**Q:** What is the significance of the Rio + 20 conference on sustainable development? Will concrete results follow or will it prove simply to be a talking shop?

**A:** As a specialist in international politics I have no illusions about international conferences. The world remains full of mutually jealous sovereign states but these meetings are still very important. Rio gives JICA a chance to assess our earlier contributions to global sustainability and then to help formulate measures and approaches which the leaders of the world can then utilize going forward. JICA has already done a lot of good things, but frankly we have also been slow in rationalizing our efforts in a globally relevant way and helping to create those necessary intellectual frameworks for the future.

**Q:** Africa remains the world’s poorest continent but JICA has significantly increased its assistance in recent years. Will this trend continue?

**A:** I think so though globally our increased help has not been fully recognized. There are ongoing resource limitations but we need to give more importance to grant aid and technical cooperation, particularly in fragile states. At the same time there has been dynamic development in some regions, particularly southern Africa, and we could use more ODA loans for infrastructure development. We should also encourage regional rather than single country approaches where applicable.

**Q:** China very publicly has increased its activities in Africa. Do you see this as an opportunity or a challenge for JICA’s own role?

**A:** Bluntly speaking, it is an opportunity. China is still in the process of learning. Africa has more needs than a single country or even groups of countries can satisfy. And so the more donors the better.

**Q:** Can you foresee JICA working directly with China in Africa or other areas of the world?

**A:** I hope that will happen. Under Madame Ogata our staff have already established some contacts with the Chinese in Africa. I would like to increase communications there and on other occasions. Chinese aid agencies have already undergone various episodes which may or may not be good for China’s reputation. And frankly Japan has also undergone some good and bad experiences. These are things we can discuss frankly not only with them but also with other emerging partners.

**Q:** What will be the future role of not only China but other emerging donor countries such as Brazil, India, Thailand?

**A:** They will not only be key, but without them the world will not be able to achieve sustained economic and social growth. There may be some challenges of coordination, but definitely we need to work very closely with these countries.

**Q:** Are you an optimist and what would you consider a ‘success’ at the end of your 3 ½ year tenure?

**A:** I am always cautiously optimistic. Success or failure will be whether I can motivate JICA’s staff to a level of performance at least as high as now, or even to a much higher level. On the ground it will be a great achievement to help the development of the less developed countries in the Mekong region; creating more joint collaborative efforts with African countries; and contributing to development debate by shaping intellectual frameworks.
A new batch of volunteers of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) arrived in Kathmandu today for a period of two years of assignment. Among the eight new volunteers, three are Senior Volunteers (SVs) and five are Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs).

Each year JICA dispatches Japanese volunteers eager to make use of their skills and experience acquired in Japan to developing countries. The new batch of JICA volunteers dispatched as per the bilateral agreement between the Governments of Nepal and Japan will be assigned to work in different fields of expertise to take part in various fields across the country and help improve the livelihood of Nepali people.

The three SVs will be working in earthquake safety and disaster management, solar energy and database management sectors at Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City, National Academy of Science and Technology, Lalitpur and Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEV), Bhaktapur.

The five JOCVs are posted at Women and Children Office, Syangja, (community development); District Development Committee, Kaski (community development); Barabise Primary Health Care Centre, Sindhupalchowk (HIV/AIDS control); District Forest Office, Tanahun (forest and plantation); and District Education Office, Syangja (youth activities).

JICA’s volunteer program started in 1965 for developing countries and in July 1970 the first three JOCVs were dispatched to Nepal. Since the inception of the program, more than 1,100 JOCVs have rendered their services in Nepal. Currently, JICA has a total of 68 volunteers working in Nepal in the areas of education, environment, health, vocational training, engineering, sports, rural development, agriculture and women empowerment.

— Santosh Chhetri

**Approval for utilization of KR Counterpart Fund**

The Government of Japan, based on the request made by the Government of Nepal, has approved the utilization of the Counterpart Fund under the Food Aid (KR) of Rs 110 million for the implementation of the Project for the Transportation of Foodgrains to Remote Area by Utilizing of Counterpart Fund. The project was approved in order to counter the existing food deficit problem in Nepal, particularly in the remote hilly and mountain districts, due to the low productivity of agriculture. Under this project, Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) will deliver an additional 3,436 metric tons of rice to twenty three remote hilly and mountain districts in addition to NFC’s annual program of delivering about 15,000 metric tons of rice. The Counterpart Fund was established through the financial assistance extended by the Government of Japan under the Food Aid (KR). The Government of Nepal has procured rice through this assistance and sold it in the domestic market. The amount collected from selling the rice was deposited as a Counterpart Fund. The Fund can be utilized for implementing various social and economic development projects through consultation between the two Governments.

— SC

**Watershed mgmt, local governance issues discussed**

A one day national seminar on “Watershed Resource Management and Local Governance” was organized by JICA’s Participatory Watershed Management and Local Governance Project (PWMLGP) on 18 May at Hotel Himalaya Kathmandu. The seminar was attended by government officials, VDC secretaries, motivators, power groups of the project area and representatives of development partners. The objective of the seminar was to share the progresses and the achievements made during the first half of the project period and get feedback and seek better coordination among the stakeholders for the rest of the project period and the beyond. The seminar was divided into two parts, opening session and technical session, where several papers were presented. After the opening session, a video documentary (promotional video) prepared by the PWMLGP was played to provide a synopsis of the project.

— PWMLGP
A MDA-MINDS (Association of Medical Doctors of Asia Multisectoral and Integrated Development Services) has been implementing the “Project for Promotion of Maternal and Child Health at Four VDCs in Nawalparasi district” in close collaboration with AMDA-Nepal, the local implementing partner, since November 2010 under the JICA Partnership Program.

‘Mother Group’ (MG) of FCHV (Female Community Health Volunteer) program is one of the unique schemes that the Government of Nepal had introduced as per the National Health Strategy in 1988. However, MGs of our target villages, so much like in other areas, were found to have been quiet these days, partly because some key MG members had graduated from the reproductive age group, especially after more than 20 years since the commencement of the program.

Considering the above situation, the project first reformed the MGs by encouraging young mothers to join to replace their mothers-in-law and hand over the membership and responsibility to ‘Buharis’ (daughters-in-law). Then, Action Members (AMs) were selected in each MG 8 health topics—Safe Motherhood, Child Health, Nutrition, Family Planning, STI/HIV and AIDS, Gender Issue, Health Fund Management, and Group Management. The project then organized topic-wise training courses for the AMs who in turn conducted peer education to other members of their groups. Though the project initially expected MGs to become a change agent for healthy behavior only, after 19 months had passed, it was found that a MG has potential to take leadership beyond the health issues in the community. That is our greatest pleasure working with them.

Voices from Mother Group Members:
Ram Kumari Chaudhary, 21, decided to deliver her baby at hospital, even though she gave birth to her previous two children at home. She is an Action Member working for safe motherhood in her MG at Pattardewa village, Amarout VDC. A few months after she had received the training, she was pregnant. Ram Kumari says, “When my labor pain started, turbid water already came out (due to amniorrhexis). Then, I immediately realized it was a danger sign which needs timely care. I rushed to hospital on a taxi burrowing Rs 2,000 loan from our group health fund.” As soon as she reached the hospital, the baby was safely delivered with appropriate care. “I would like to further teach other friends in peer education to motivate them for behavior change, because the knowledge saved my life,” he adds.

Gita Khawaswho, 23, and a member of the MG at Shreenagar village, Amarout VDC also says, “After joining the MG, I never felt alone like in the past because I can share happiness, sadness, family issues and everything here. The group made me strong. Moreover, I found that a woman who is not well educated like me can also do something for the village that had been believed a men’s job before.” Her group friend Rukh Maya Gurung, 39, echoes the same. “We are the inhabitants of this area called ‘Sukumbashi’ where people live without their own land. Other community people always look down on us by labeling the poorest of the poor. But we strongly wish to live in better way here.” Gita adds, “Our MG helped us not only by providing knowledge about health, but also by establishing our health fund as well as through working together. Now, we have a small meeting place with a roof which we made with the VDC’s support office through our own effort. Next year, we are planning to complete the meeting hall by constructing walls and a door. We are slowly, but surely moving ahead.”

Ram Kumari Chaudhary and her baby.

Promotion
JICA Nepal has promoted Senior Program Officer Narendra Gurung to the post of Chief Program Officer. We wish him a successful tenure.

Incoming and Outgoing Staff
JICA Nepal welcomes the following new staff members:

Chhatra Nayak
Administrative Officer

Bidhya Pokharel
Program Officer

JICA Nepal wishes to extend a warm THANK YOU to the following outgoing staff:

Sushil Kumar Bhattachan
Chief Program Officer
(Mr Bhattachan retired after 33 years of service in JICA Nepal leaving behind a rich legacy of sincere and honest work)

Binaya Das Shrestha
Administrative Officer

Laxmi Konwar
Program Officer

(Ms Thapa is associated with AMDA-MINDS Nepal)
Government officials sent to Japan for JICA training from April-June 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Training</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Improvement in Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>May 14-25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Technology Introduced and/or Applied to Developing Countries</td>
<td>May 13-July 30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Health</td>
<td>May 20-July 6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers</td>
<td>June 3-July 5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Japanese ODA Loan Seminar</td>
<td>April 9-21</td>
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<td>Global Mapping for Sustainable Development</td>
<td>May 14-August 2</td>
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<td>Strengthening Management and Business Activities of Agricultural Cooperatives</td>
<td>May 6-July 14</td>
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<td>Seminar for Foreign Senior Police Officer</td>
<td>June 3-23</td>
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<td>Community Capacity and Rural Development Promotion for Asian Countries</td>
<td>June 10-29</td>
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<td>Education Administration and Finance</td>
<td>May 28-July 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Governance</td>
<td>May 30-July 14</td>
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If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for what you would like to see in future issues, please do not hesitate to write us.