



# JICA Philippines NEWSLETTER

Volume 42

February 2011

## Realizations

**By: Michael P.Sy  
TPYL Participant**

I have never travelled abroad, until I was given a fortunate opportunity to visit Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) last November.

My experience in Japan through JICA's Training Program for Young Leaders (TPYL) Support System for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) category has widened my horizons as an individual, enriched my knowledge as an occupational therapist, and made me love the Philippines more than I had.



**Instead of resting or visiting Japan's parks or shopping malls, these Filipino trainees went to a hospital on their "free" day to learn more.**

## Sa Gyō Ryō Hyō Shī desu!

I am an occupational therapist (*sa gyō ryō hyō shī*), and am fortunate enough to represent the occupational therapy (OT) profession as a Filipino delegate in the TPYL 2010. A fairly established profession in the Philippines but a well-known profession in Japan, OT is the art and science of helping persons with disabilities (PWDs) caused by diseases or impairment to achieve independence and quality of life through the use of meaningful activities or occupations.

After proudly telling people that I am an occupational therapist after being asked what I do for a living, I more often than not get a puzzled expression along with a baffled question "Ano 'yun?" (What is that?). Indeed, I have explained how occupational therapists teach children with disabilities become independent in feeding, dressing, and toileting, and how we help a person with stroke adapt to work and enjoy life again after being hospitalized for six months more than a thousand times already.



Last November 18, 2010, we had our day-off from the training seminar. Instead of curling up in bed to regain strength from the tiring days of training, some of my co-trainees and I decided to visit the Fukui Prefectural Hospital to take a glimpse of how the rehabilitation team works in Japan.

**It is Michael's first time to travel outside the Philippines. He visited Japan through the JICA Training Programme for Young Leaders (TPYL) last November.**

The state-of-the-art architecture and hotel-like look of the hospital amazed us all. Walking through the extremely tidy and carpeted halls of the hospital was indeed therapeutic. Almost all the equipment and tools used by the therapists are automated; each of them carefully and perfectly stored. However, more than the high-tech facilities and conducive environment for rehabilitation, it is their utmost commitment to help their countrymen with disabilities that really struck me. It was also very uplifting to learn that Japanese therapists chose to be such because they have this spirit of deep gratitude to their elders, whom they believe are the ones who placed Japan to where it is now.

## Loving the Philippines Even more

Visiting Japan is a rare opportunity, but going there as a national delegate is a dream come true. No human race can ever compare to the discipline of the Japanese people. Their high-speed technological advancements astonish the world. Their love for the environment and cleanliness distinguish them among other nations. Their social awareness and nationalism have become an inspiration for other developing countries. For three weeks, I have witnessed these things. Japanese people never failed to amaze me every day during my stay there.



**Michael shows his TPYL Certificate beside the Philippine flag.**

How I wish we, Filipinos, would also cross the pedestrian lanes *only* when the green light is on; manufacture Philippine-made mobile phones and automobiles; separately throw bottle caps, plastic bottles, paper, and biodegradable refuse in labeled waste bins; and integrate persons with disabilities within the community like others through appropriate accessibility modifications and proper implementation of the laws.

Developing as a nation, I believe, is more than just building more infrastructures, establishing more businesses, or producing highly skilled professionals, it is about being more socially aware and more loving to our fellow Filipinos.

Every time I saw the progressiveness of the Japanese in the littlest sense throughout the training period gave me the impulse to go back to the Philippines and share my novel experiences and discoveries. Most Filipinos say that our system is already infiltrated with so much negativities that all we need to do to survive is go abroad to seek for greener pastures. You might be thinking the same, many of us are. But what if the opportunities here are just oases amidst a desert? What if we just need to love our country a little bit more? What if we always take an extra step in all the things that we do, sounding different this time? Changing our way of thinking about our country can now make us all feel the meaning of national anthem ending: “Ang mamatay ng dahil sa’yo” (To die for my country). ☺

**Michael P. Sy is the Executive Director of Prime Movers Review Center — a review center for Occupational and Physical Therapy, located at 2/F Kaimo Bldg., Quezon Avenue corner Sto. Domingo Street, Quezon City.**

A silhouette of a samurai helmet (kabuto) is shown on the left side of a banner. The background is a light green color with a subtle grid pattern.

## Meet the Samurai 6

Six Japanese volunteers in the Philippines bring in innovative ways to teach science and math

With not a samurai sword but a trash bag in hand, Kota Matsunaga announced to the teachers in front of him: "I am going to show you the weight of air!" Then he hit his friend and fellow volunteer beside him with the trash bag, whom he later asked: "Did it hurt?"

"The seminar was like a comical show. It was fun as much as it was informative," one of the teachers in the audience said. About one hundred science and math coordinators and principals attended the seminar; they represent half of Iloilo's 52 districts. The other half attended the seminar held earlier.

The seminar held in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo on the first week of February is one in a series of science and math events. These events are a brainchild of six young Japanese volunteer teachers who refer to themselves as "Samurai 6".

The Samurai 6 are doing volunteer work in the Philippines for two years as part of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV). At present, there are about 75 JOCVs in the country. Among the 75, the initiative of the six is unique.

Kota Matsunaga, Tetsuhiro Takimoto, and Hiroki Hamada, are all elementary school teachers; while Kiyosuke Ueda's field is special education, and Toshiyuki Taguchi and Daisuke Honma specialize in science and math.

Their places of assignment are quite far apart. While Hamada and Taguchi are assigned in different cities in Oriental Negros, Matsunaga is based in Iloilo, Takimoto in Sorsogon, Ueda in Quezon and Honma in Bohol. Yet distance did not hinder these men to put their efforts together to create synergy. "We believe it is more effective (to work together)," Matsunaga said.

Matsunaga further explained that although they do not have exactly the same assignments, they are all concerned about how to make lessons more interesting, especially for slow learners. "Kapoy ako pero (I'm worn out but) it's worth it," Matsunaga told the JICA writer, after the seminar in Iloilo.

The group patterned their name after a famous novel (Seven Samurai) which later became a hit Japanese animation (Samurai 7); but since there are only six of them in the group, they changed it to Samurai 6. Like the group after which they got their name, all six men exhibit the samurai's attitude towards duty and learning. ☺

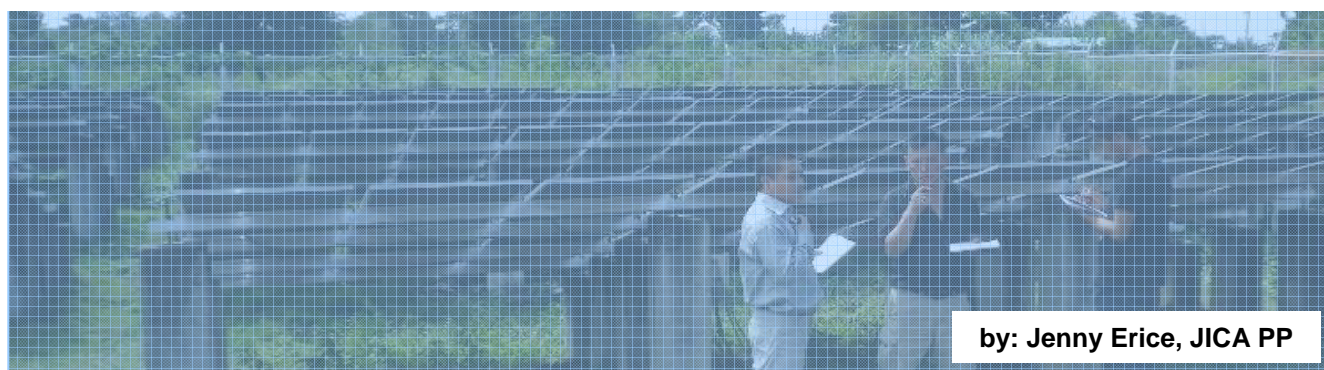


(Above) Japanese volunteer, Kota Matsunaga gives instructions at a football practice in the town plaza of Sta. Barbara, Iloilo, while his colleagues (left) demonstrate the weight and shape of air in a seminar

Text and photos by:  
Eloisa Romero, JICA PP

## The happiest country in Asia train their engineers in the Philippines

# LIGHTING UP BHUTAN'S REMOTE VILLAGES



by: Jenny Erice, JICA PP

Filipino experts on solar power trained six engineers from Bhutan to provide electricity to far-flung Bhutanese villages.

JICA Philippine Office has been sending Filipino experts (called Third Country Experts) from the Department of Energy (DOE) to Bhutan. These experts conduct Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Training for Trainers, and for the third time, two DOE experts visited Bhutan this month to conduct on-the-job training for the Bhutanese trainees. The experts likewise conducted an intermediate qualifying examination for six Bhutanese Engineers who underwent training in the Philippines in late January. Earlier in 2009 and 2010, these engineers received the certificate for Basic Trainers from DOE.

While in Manila, the Bhutanese Engineers had briefing sessions on PV Programs, Projects, Policies and Solar Installation in the Philippines, including Safety on Solar Inspections at the DOE. They also visited the Centralized Solar Streetlight Project of the Philippine National Oil Company – Renewables Corporation (PNOC-RC). They flew to Cebu to view the Solar Pumping Site in Alegria and the 45Kw Solar Power Plant in Pangan-an, Lapu-lapu City. They moved further down to Cagayan de Oro City to visit a 1MW grid-connected Solar Power Plant. Through these site visits, the trainees got a grip of the Philippine experience.

JICA is implementing a two-year technical cooperation project in Bhutan to improve the latter's rural power supply. Bhutan is a small landlocked country in South Asia, located at the eastern end of the Himalayas with China in the north and India wrapped around its borders. In 2006, Business Week magazine rated Bhutan the happiest country in Asia and the eighth-happiest in the world based on a global survey.

Being rich in hydro power sources, Bhutan has been exporting 60-70 % of hydro power to India via grid connection. In spite of this, Bhutan is yet to provide electricity to the entire country. With remote villages scattered in mountainous areas, it is too expensive to extend the power grid to improve the situation. Thus, independent power supply such as Solar Home Systems could be more effective. Its government targets 100% household electrification by 2013. The knowledge and skills shared by Filipino experts contributes to the achievement of this target, and more happiness points for Bhutan. ☺

### About JICA:

JICA is an agency of the Government of Japan responsible for implementing the technical cooperation, grant aid and yen loan programs of Japan's official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries such as the Philippines. JICA is the world's largest bilateral aid agency with about USD10.3 billion in financial resources and a network of more than 100 overseas offices around the world. Its core professional staff work hand in hand with dispatched Japanese personnel, experts and volunteers and local staff in the overseas offices in promoting human security which is incorporated in about a hundred on-going cooperation programs.

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