

Mr Mamoru Ohtsuka**JICA Volunteer (July 2002 – July 2004)**

In July 2002, I left Japan for the first time. I was in the first batch of JICA volunteers sent to South Africa. I was dispatched as Maths Teacher at the Ndebele Teachers Centre in Siyabuswa, Mpumalanga, until July 2004. I recall working with my counterpart, Mr Frank Mengwai, Curriculum Implementer, to host workshops for Maths teachers to support and encourage them. Before leaving for South Africa, I thought I could help teachers and students in foreign countries with my experience as Maths teacher. However, some time after arrival in South Africa, and having worked with Mr Mengwai and others, often times I found myself at the receiving end of such skills transfer. During my tenure, JICA was also implementing the Mpumalanga Secondary Science Initiative (MSSI). We tried to create a model with a balance of theory, being academic aspects of MSSI, and practice, being volunteer activities. Working with the education department in Mpumalanga, and professors in Japan, was invaluable. Today, I'm teaching at preparatory schools in foreign countries, specifically Japanese students in Bangkok, Thailand. I'm not only teaching Maths, but also sharing stories from time spent in South Africa. Being a leader, I'm challenging myself to undertake some ambitious projects, just like we tried in South Africa. I wish I could visit South Africa again to greet my former colleagues and to have "pap", my favourite food in Siyabuswa! Herewith I attach photos of myself lecturing learners, and with my homestay family.

