

Conclusion: Achievements and Evaluation of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs)

As has been described above, over the past 60 years, the JOCVs have contributed in various ways to the development and growth of developing countries. The dedication of volunteers, who persistently work to solve problems and complete their assignments while overcoming difficulties alongside the local people of their host countries, and the way they carry out their activities underpinned by a strong sense of commitment and a high level of professionalism, have served as a source of unwavering friendship and deep respect toward Japanese people as a whole within the international community and have thus made significant contributions to friendship and goodwill between Japan and various countries.

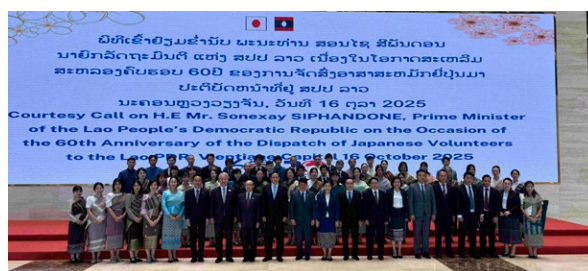
To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the JICA Volunteer Program, a commemorative ceremony was held in Tokyo on November 13, 2025, in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress. In the first part of the ceremony, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri read a congratulatory message from Prime Minister Takaichi in which she commended the activities of approximately 58,000 JOCVs, who have been dispatched to 99 countries over 60 years, and expressed her expectations for their continued contributions across various fields upon returning from their missions. She also stated that “the trust and bonds that JOCVs have built up in the international community over the past 60 years are an invaluable asset in Japan’s efforts to restore a Japanese diplomacy that flourishes at the center of the world’s stage.” A congratulatory address was then delivered by Ms. Obuchi, a member of the House of Representatives and the Chair of the Parliamentary League for Supporting Japan’s International Cooperation – Especially the Activities of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JICA Parliamentary League), followed by a video message from Prime Minister Marape of Papua New Guinea. Ms. AOKI Yuka, representing returned volunteers, expressed hope for further growth of the JOCVs’ activities, after which Ms. OTSU Riho, a high school student representing the next generation, shared her desire to engage in international cooperation in the future. In the second part of the ceremony, a roundtable discussion with returned volunteers and other events was held. The grand ceremony, attended by many stakeholders and returned volunteers, served as an opportunity to look back on the 60-year journey of the JOCVs and reaffirm their significance.

Commemorative events were held not only in Japan, but also in countries that first received JOCVs when the program was launched. The ceremony in Laos held in

October was attended by Foreign Minister Thongsavan and Finance Minister Santiphab. Prime Minister Sonexay delivered a congratulatory message stating that “the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers not only transfer technology and knowledge to Laos, but also learn the Lao language and the wonderful culture and traditions of Laos. JOCVs also play a significant role in deepening the friendly and cooperative relations between Laos and Japan.”

At the commemorative event in the Philippines held in August, which a JICA Parliamentary League delegation also attended, Senator Zubiri, the President of the Philippines–Japan Parliamentary Friendship Association, lauded the vital person-to-person dimension that the program has brought to the Philippines-Japan friendship. He also stated that “the JOCVs symbolize Japan’s unwavering support and assistance, and that their spirit of volunteerism truly reflects the very best of the Japanese character.” He expressed deep gratitude for their immense contributions over the years.

Throughout its 60 years of history, the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have broadened its scope and undergone reorganization to align with the needs of developing countries. At the same time, the objectives established at its founding, “to cooperate in the economic and social development of developing countries,” “to



A scene from the 60th anniversary ceremony for the dispatch of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers held in Laos (Photo: JICA)



A scene from the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers 60th anniversary commemorative event held in the Philippines (Photo: JICA)

deepen friendship and mutual understanding,” and “to give back the volunteer experience to society,” have remained unchanged throughout, and their significance has grown even greater today.

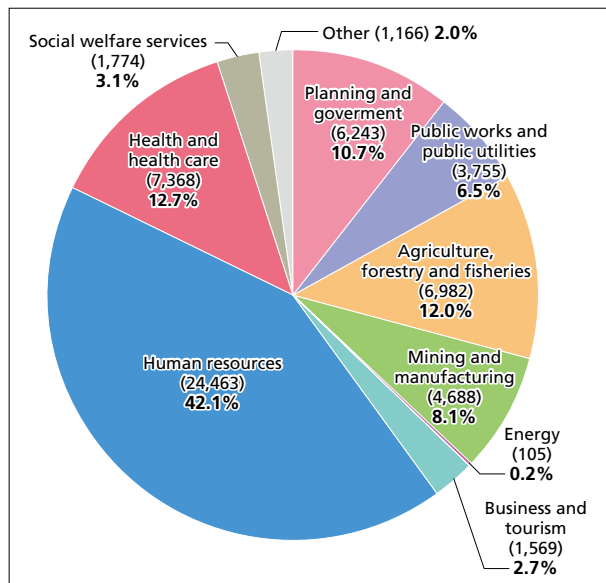
The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers will continue to support Japan’s international cooperation as a driving force for realizing the “co-creation” that Japan’s ODA aims to achieve in the future.

Chart I-3 60 Years of the JICA Volunteer Program in Figures

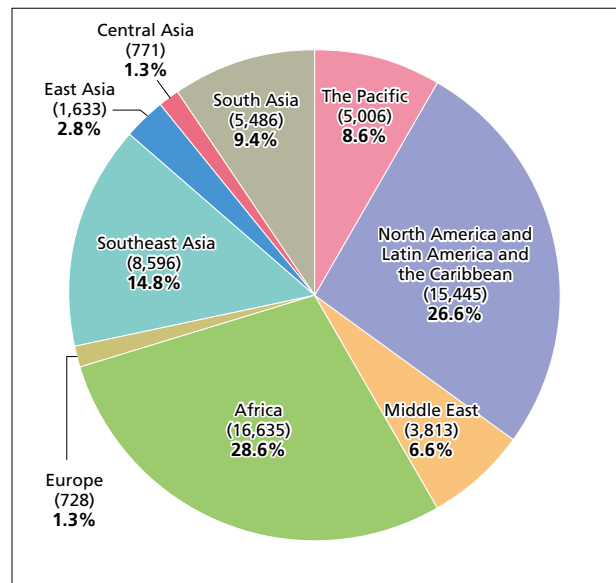
As of December 31, 2025

	Number of countries of dispatch	Number of volunteers	Male	Female
Cumulative total	99	58,113	31996: 55%	26117: 45%
Currently serving	74	1,658	629: 38%	1029: 62%

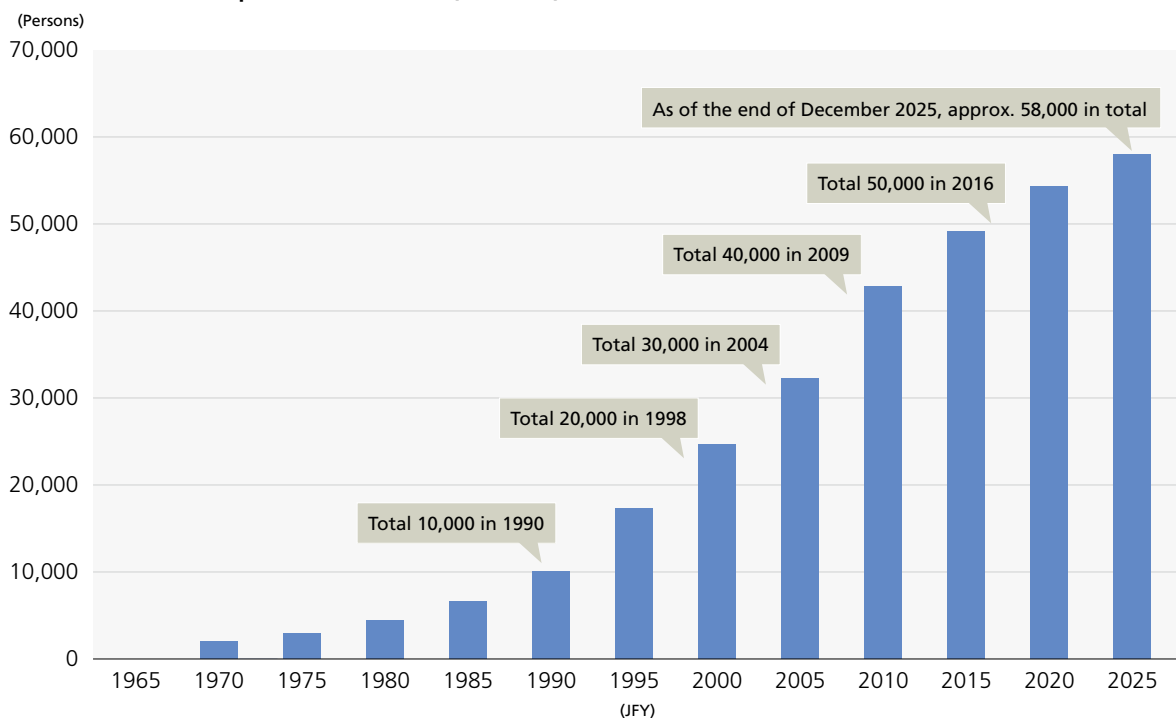
• Dispatch Results by Field (as of December 31, 2025)



• Dispatch Results by Region (as of December 31, 2025)



• Total Number of Dispatched Volunteers (Statistics)



The Power of JICA Volunteers

– Change the World, Change Japan –

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary, we present messages received from various partners as well as current and former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV).

Voices from Government Leaders in Host Countries



Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Harini Amarasuriya

I extend my appreciation to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Volunteer Program for its continued contribution to Sri Lanka's development efforts. Since 1981, JICA Volunteers (JOCV) have served as a bridge between Japan and Sri Lanka. Their work in education, health, rural development, and youth empowerment has supported community development and strengthened bilateral cooperation. On behalf of the government and the people of Sri Lanka, I express our gratitude for this long-standing partnership and the continued support extended by Japan through JICA. We look forward to further collaboration that advances mutual growth and sustainable development.

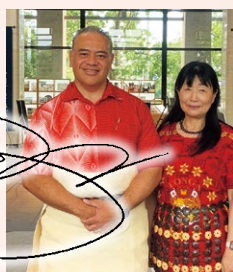
Harini Amarasuriya

Prime Minister of Belize, John Antonio Briceño

It is with great pleasure that I join countries worldwide in congratulating the Government of Japan on the 60th Anniversary of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers program. Recognized as one of the oldest volunteer organizations in the world, the JOCV has proven its commitment to nation-building, a commitment shared by my administration. In the JOCV's 25 years of operation in Belize, 210 Japanese volunteers have contributed significantly to areas like the environment, sports, education and the inclusivity of children with disabilities. On behalf of the Government and People of Belize, I express our heartfelt appreciation to the Government and People of Japan, along with our commitment to strengthen the ties of friendship, cooperation and mutual respect which bind both our countries.



John Antonio Briceño



Ambassador of Tonga to Japan, Tevita Suka Mangisi

The JOCV programme is a means towards strengthening, sustaining, and securing Tonga-Japan relations at all levels. My own personal experience was with my math teacher, Ms. Chimoto Fukagawa nee Ogata who was assigned to Tonga High School in 1987. Almost 40 years later, we met again and are working together in areas including disaster education, and sustainable agriculture, through an NPO called Terra People's Association (TPA) of which she is one of the Directors. The relationship is a direct result of the JOCV carried forward by a kizuna between a JOCV teacher and her student.

The author (left) and Ms. Fukagawa

Voice from Corporate Supporters

TOPPAN Holdings Inc., President & CEO, MARO Hideharu



An employee working on an environmental awareness workshop as an environmental education volunteer in Malaysia (Photo: TOPPAN Holdings Inc.)

I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the 60th anniversary of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs). Since FY2013, our company has utilized the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (Partnership Program), and to date a cumulative total of 19 employees have been dispatched as JOCVs to countries around the world. Through their activities in the field, our dispatched employees have cultivated autonomous leadership that transcends differences in culture and business practices, and they continue to make an active contribution upon their return to Japan by drawing on what they have learned. I would like to express my deepest respect to all those who have long supported the JOCV program, which fosters a mindset for tackling social challenges and contributes to the "human resource development" that drives the global business of Japanese companies. I look forward to the continued further development of the JOCV program as it paves the way for the future of the world and Japan.



磨 秀 晴

Voices from Host Institutions

Federation of Japanese Association in Paraguay, President, ISHIDA Miguel

I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the 60th anniversary of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs). Dispatch to Paraguay began in 1978 with the arrival of three volunteers, and as the first country in South America to receive volunteers, the relationship has spanned 47 years, laying a foundation for friendship between Japan and Paraguay. Involvement with the Nikkei community began in 1980 with the arrival of physical education and music volunteers to the Pirapo Settlement in the southeast, and since then many volunteers have been active across diverse fields, making significant contributions in areas such as Japanese language education, elderly welfare, and human resource development. I express my sincere respect and deep gratitude for these years of dedicated efforts. As 2026 marks the 90th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Paraguay, I respectfully request your continued support and the ongoing dispatch of volunteers.



Founder/Professor, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), India; Former Member of Parliament Achyuta Samanta

I extend heartfelt congratulations to JICA on the 60th Anniversary of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers program. Japan's ODA has profoundly enriched our institutions through dedicated JOCV volunteers who have fostered deep cultural bonds between India and Japan. The partnership with JICA exemplifies grassroots international cooperation at its finest. JICA volunteers in Japanese Language education have empowered students through the Japan Ready-Industry Ready program, while rugby coaches have transformed sports development at our campuses, creating competitive and inclusive environments. We deeply value JICA's philosophy of human resource development, mutual respect, and grassroots engagement. The volunteers' dedication to knowledge sharing aligns perfectly with our mission of inclusive education and social empowerment. We look forward to strengthening this partnership and contributing together to a more connected, prosperous, and harmonious world.

Messages from Current and Former JOCVs

Active Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) in Community Development, Dispatched to Rwanda, "Water Security Action Team (W-SAT)," ISHIKAWA Mayu

The "Water Security Action Team (W-SAT)" has been working to ensure safe water access for local residents, including through the maintenance and management of wells and spring water sources. I took over the activities of my predecessors and work with Rwanda's Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC) to build a system for delivering well parts from the capital to rural villages. Every time a resident I was meeting for the first time called out "JICA!" with a smile, I was reminded that the achievements of the JOCVs, built up over many years, were still alive in the field in the form of trust. Now that we have reached the 60th anniversary, I intend to continue to sincerely reflect on the path the volunteers have walked and to think about how to provide support that better aligns with the realities of each community.



The author (second from left) celebrating with the village chief after the successful completion of well repairs



The author teaching a class in preparation for a debate competition at a Japanese-style technical college (KOSEN) in Mongolia (Photo: JICA)

Former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) Japanese Language Education, Dispatched to Mongolia SAKURAI Chiyoko

I still remember standing in front of a classroom in Mongolia for the first time 31 years ago. I was searching for what I, as an inexperienced teacher, could offer to the first generation of students who were now free to study Japanese after democratization. The frustration of not being able to contribute as fully as I wished, and the joy of deeply connecting with the people of that country when living among them, became a turning point, leading me to continue to teach Japanese abroad ever since. Two years ago, I returned to Mongolia as a volunteer once again. I have come to realize that the JOCV program broadens one's horizons in life, and is a place where one can discover a new side of oneself at any age.



International Development Cooperation Under Strain and Japan's Mission

■ OHNO Izumi, Professor Emeritus, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS)



The year 2025 will be remembered in history as a major turning point in international development cooperation. A symbolic event is the dismantlement of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced by the Trump administration, which took office in January, along with a sweeping reduction

in contributions to international organizations such as the United Nations. Since the end of World War II, the United States has consistently led international development, both in terms of financing and ideas, as the world's top donor (except during the 1990s, when Japan was the top donor). As such, the abrupt withdrawal of the United States from international development has had a profound impact on the international community.

Major European donors have also faced pressure to reduce their ODA due to the crisis in Ukraine and the growing demand to increase defense budgets. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projects a further 9 to 17% reduction in ODA in 2025, following a 9% decline in 2024. It is the first time in nearly 30 years that major donors such as the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France have all moved simultaneously to cut aid budgets, underscoring growing strains on the Western-led framework that has long driven international development cooperation. Meanwhile, as challenges such as geopolitical confrontation, conflict, climate change, pandemics, and the digital divide grow more intertwined, vulnerable groups in developing countries face severe hardship.

How should Japan respond to this global contraction of ODA, and what role should it play? First, the current situation has highlighted the risks of excessive aid dependency. Developing countries need to further strengthen the mobilization of domestic resources through economic transformation and expanded tax revenue, and to pursue autonomous development. Second, it is essential that diverse actors, including developed countries, emerging countries, the private sector, and non-profit organizations, collaborate to broaden the base of development financing beyond ODA. Partnerships with emerging countries in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean as well as with Gulf countries, and collaboration with private companies and foundations, will become increasingly important. Third, development partners

should also review their cooperation approaches and place greater emphasis, from a medium- to long-term perspective, on investing in institution-building and human resource development, as well as on leveraging private finance.

In this context, Japan, a non-Western donor and once a latecomer to development, has fostered a unique approach to cooperation, occupying the position of both a "learner" and a "provider" of development knowledge. These qualities include an emphasis on self-help efforts and autonomous development, the process of translating and adapting foreign institutions and technologies to the context of partner countries, and the commitment to standing by partners in the field to support the capacity development of their organizations and human resources. These deserve to be reassessed now. Japan should confidently disseminate its development cooperation approach to the international community and, rather than following the lead of Western countries, should strive to maintain its ODA budget and secure a sufficient volume of projects. At the same time, in order to maximize the impact of limited funding, Japan is encouraged to actively pursue support for upstream policy and institution-building, the use of ODA loans to the social sector and regional development, and stronger partnerships with the private sector and civil society.

Furthermore, building on its experience of promoting triangular cooperation and South-South cooperation in partnership with emerging countries, Japan should serve, at a time when Western donors are faltering, as a "stabilizer" of international development and a "nexus" of international solidarity.

From these perspectives, the April 2025 amendment to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Act, which expanded financial instruments for private finance mobilization, was extremely timely. With ODA serving as a catalyst and through co-creation with diverse actors, new value can be generated, contributing to the resolution of increasingly complex challenges. It is also noteworthy that at the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), held in Yokohama in August, JICA, together with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), organized a consultation with emerging donor agencies from Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, marking the beginning of cross-regional collaboration.

"Autonomous development" and "aid for graduation" are principles that Japan has consistently valued. Now is the time to return to these fundamentals, engage partners from emerging countries and the Global South, and navigate this turning point in international development cooperation.