Chapter 1. Background and Purpose of Evaluation

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) Program is for Japanese young men and women with certain technical skills to assist economic and social development of developing countries while living and working together with the local people. Since its foundation in 1965, a total of 22,000 volunteers has been dispatched to 77 nations (July 31, 2001).

Transferring technologies is not the only purpose of JOCV program, since there are other significant outcomes such as mutual understanding and international friendship through volunteer activities at grass-roots level, and development of human resources of Japanese youth. The following are the major outcomes of JOCV program.

(1) Contribution to socio-economic development of recipient countries through cooperative activities

(2) Promotion of international friendship and bi-lateral relationship based on mutual understanding between Japanese volunteers and the people of recipient countries through cooperative activities.

(3) Development of human resources of Japanese youth through cooperative activities and return of the developed resources to Japanese society through social activities in Japan after completion of JOCV services.

JOCV program is highly appreciated by the agencies and local government bodies of recipient countries. Also in Japan, importance of JOCV program is being acknowledged as “aid with visibility” or “program of participatory activities”, while JOCV program originally started as “volunteer activities”. Now, this program is required to be more efficient than ever, as an important element of ODA. Currently, outcomes of JOCV program are highlighted and evaluation of them is drawing attention of the people in Japan.

Purpose of this evaluation study is to disclose outcomes of JOCV program and evaluate its achievements, taking into consideration any historical change of the program itself and its
surrounding situations within and outside Japan. Another aim of this study is to identify essential issues which JOCV has to overcome in future for more efficient operation of its program, and also to derive any proposal for more strategic JOCV program in the 21st century.

**Chapter 2. Evaluation System**

2-1. Framework of evaluation

2-1-1. Viewpoints

(1) Objectives of JOCV program

JOCV started its operation in 1965 as governmental services which were then entrusted to Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA), forerunner of current Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a lead ministry had drafted the “Outline of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (hereinafter the ‘JOCV Outline’)” in consultation with other relevant ministries. Then, JOCV program was carried out in accordance with the JOCV Outline until 1974 when JICA was founded under the Japan International Cooperation Agency Laws (the JICA Laws).

A book entitled “JOCV, The Track of the 20th Century (Seinen-Kaigai-Kyoryokutai 20-seiki no kiseki) ”, published in January 2001, describes a history of the transition from the JOCV Outline to the JICA Laws and its interpretation. The book states that “JOCV program consists of overseas cooperative activities carried out by young persons, and the purpose of such activities is to cooperate for socio-economic development in developing areas. ‘International friendship’ and ‘development of human resources of Japanese youth’, which were also mentioned in the JOCV Outline are important components, but they are no longer regarded as purposes of JOCV program in the JICA Laws. They are considered just as valuable outcomes achieved by JOCV’s cooperative activities”.

Thus, according to the JICA Laws, the purpose of JOCV program is to “cooperate in the socio-economic development of recipient countries.”

(2) Objectives of JOCV program

As mentioned above, the purpose of JOCV program under the JICA Laws is the “contribution to the socio-economic development of recipient countries”. However, the “international friendship”, the “return of developed human resources to Japanese society” and the “development of young human resources” are not just the secondary effects of JOCV program but rather are playing rather essential roles as expected outcomes.
This evaluation study, therefore, is done on the assumption that the below listed three elements are the objectives of JOCV program (or the outcomes to be achieved through operation of JOCV program). This study verifies various aspects of not only the “contribution to socio-economic development of recipient countries” but also the “international friendship” and the “return of developed human resources to Japanese society” with reference to examples of outcomes achieved.

Three objectives of JOCV program set forth in this evaluation study are:

(A) **Contribution to socio-economic development of recipient countries** through cooperative activities

(B) **Promotion of international friendship and bi-lateral relationship between Japan and recipient countries**, based on mutual understanding between Japanese volunteers and the people of recipient countries through cooperative activities.

(C) **Development of human resources of Japanese youth** through their cooperative activities and **return of such developed human resources to Japanese society** through their social activities in Japan after completion of JOCV services.

2-1-2. Evaluation system

This study evaluates JOCV program by dividing it into two levels, namely the Program level and the Project level, as shown in Chart-1. The results of evaluation at Project level are used as indicators or supporting evidences to the Program level evaluation.

(1) Program level

Set issues and indicators for analysis in evaluation of each of the three objectives of JOCV program. Based on results of such analysis, some suggestions are made. At the same time, relevance of these three objectives as the objectives of ODA program is also reviewed.

For check of implementation process of JOCV program (implementation and supporting systems and institutions), positive or negative factors to achieve each objective of the program are sorted out and then some suggestions are made.

(2) Project level

Questionnaires, interviews or other existing materials are sorted out for use of their information as the indicators at the program level evaluation. Investigation is also extended to check implementation and supporting systems for activities of JOCV volunteers.
Chapter 3. Outline of JOCV program
3–1. Mechanism of JOCV Program

3–1–1. Agreement on Dispatch of Volunteers

The JOCV program is executed in accordance with “Agreement on Dispatch of the JOCV (Dispatch Agreement)” between the Japanese government and the government of a recipient country. Based on the Agreement, the government of a recipient country sends official requests for the dispatch of the JOCV, in accordance with which the government of Japan recruits volunteers. Recruitment is carried out twice a year, in spring and fall. The applicants take two exams. Successful applicants undertake a 79–day training course as JOCV candidates. After this training, the candidates become JOCV members. They are assigned to the ministries, agencies or other governmental organizations concerned, or NGO in recipient countries and serve there for two years, in principle, as being requested so. In general, many of these volunteers are individually assigned, but in case of requests for larger scale assistance, groups or teams of volunteer members are sent on a project basis.

3–2. History of program

JOCV was founded in 1965 and started its volunteer activities abroad, utilizing technical skills and knowledge of Japanese youth. At that time, Japan had already recovered from the aftermath of World War II, and had rejoined international society. Along with expansion of its exports and settlement of postwar compensation issues, Japan started its economic assistance to developing countries in Asia.

After having heated debates on which organization must be responsible for activities of JOCV, the extraordinary committee of the Liberal Democratic Party decided to commission JOCV to the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA) in December 1964, one year before establishment of JOCV. On January 20 1965, OTCA established the JOCV Preparative Office (JOCV Junbi–Jimukyoku). On April 20 of the same year, the JOCV Secretariat (JOCV Jimukyoku) was founded, and the program of JOCV started with a budget of 72,870,000 yen. Number of planned intake volunteers for the first year was 50, but the applicants exceeded more than ten times of the planned number.

Because of its historical and economic ties with Asian countries and from the fact that preparatory survey teams prior to JOCV foundation had covered mainly Asian countries, it seemed natural that the first volunteers were dispatched to South–East Asia. But, in fact, dispatch of volunteers to African countries was also planned from the beginning, and it started with the two countries in East Africa, namely, Kenya (1966) and Tanzania (1967). Morocco in North Africa was the first French speaking country to receive JOCV in 1967.

Since late 80’s, Japan has exceeded USA and European countries in ODA amounts and has become a top donor in the world. Accordingly, number of recipient countries of JOCV has rapidly
increased. In January 2002, no less than 2,446 volunteers (of which 54% are women) are staying in 65 countries (among total 77 countries with which Japan has executed Agreements to dispatch JOCV). Their average age is 27 years old.

3-3. Engagement of JOCV Secretariat

3-3-1. New dispatch

At the beginning of the fiscal year 2001, newly 1,250 volunteers had been planned to dispatch, but only 1,050 were dispatched. Even though number of applicants increases every year, actual number of newly dispatched volunteers remains almost at the same level (1,093 dispatches in 1998, 1,248 in 1999, 1,135 in 2000). Reasons for this include imbalance between numbers of requests and applicants, or in other words that the domestic needs do not always match the needs of recipient countries. At the same time, number of applicants who fail to pass health check is increasing (28% of the total applicants).

3-3-2. Supporting system for ex-volunteers

In the fiscal year 2000, Human Resources Assessment Department (Haken Shien-bu) was established in the JICA headquarter in order to assist its experts and JOCVs. Consequently, JICA could improve its system of welfare and health management as well could enhance its system to capitalize on and develop human resources of ex-volunteers who has returned to Japan after completion of services abroad. In the same fiscal year, Career Counseling Division for Ex-volunteers (Kikoku-taiin Shien-situ) was set up in JOCV Secretariat in order to develop careers of ex-volunteers and support their social activities. This Career Counseling Division is also promoting its coordination and consultation with related organizations to set up a comprehensive career path system for development of human resources in the field of international cooperation.

Chapter 4. Program Evaluation

This evaluation study covers three objectives of JOCV program: “contribution to socio-economic development of recipient countries”, “enhancement of international friendship and bilateral relationship” and “development of human resources of Japanese youth, and return of the developed human resources to Japanese society”.

4-1. Contribution to the socio-economic development of recipient countries

Based on the checking items A, B and C of the following chart, the “contribution to the socio-economic development of recipient countries” is evaluated and analyzed.
4–1–1. Needs and circumstances of recipient countries to receive JOCV volunteers

It has become clear that any difference in scale of aid given and circumstances to receive such aid is an important factor to influence the nature of needs for JOCVs in a recipient country. In Bangladesh, for example, some host agencies tend to require volunteers with advanced knowledge and skills. Some circumstances to receive JOCVs may emphasize “outcomes” and “evaluation” of volunteers’ activities, being influenced by policies of other donor countries.

According to questionnaires, about 30% of ex-volunteers replied that the needs for JOCVs by any agency of recipient countries were not very high. In this case, achievements conceived by JOCVs tend to be low. But, in fact, many recipient countries have a high demand for transfer of skills and knowledge of young volunteers. Attitude of the Japanese volunteers, trying to learn local language and culture through their cooperative works together with the local people, certainly gives good impression and impact to their counter-parts and local communities. Verification research of relevance in the case studies shows that JOCV is “highly needed by final beneficiaries”. Therefore, JOCV deserves credit for its role of keeping “consistency with the needs of final beneficiaries” in the scheme of Japan’s ODA. However, as shown in this study, some Japanese volunteers fail to realize the needs for their activities and cannot feel a sense of high achievement. This is because of a lack of medium– and long–term objectives to dispatch volunteers and no overall goals set forth. In conclusion, it could be possible to dispatch JOCVs, which reflect the needs of final beneficiaries and meet development issues of recipient countries by improving a primary design of dispatch plan.

4–1–2. Effectiveness and efficiency of JOCV program
Any dispatch with concrete objectives at the stage of requests shows its high relevance and achievement. On the contrary, poorly designed plans at the request stage can hardly produce expected outcomes even with a larger number of volunteers dispatched. Most of complaints against overseas offices of JICA/JOCV and Japanese coordinators arise from improper requests of recipient countries or insufficient research of the backgrounds of such requests, so that any improvement at the stage of requests can eliminate such complaints. Interviews with coordinators have proved that some points for improvement are already clarified. Also, some problems have already been pointed out in the records written by some coordinators, but they are left without effective feedback to the activities of volunteers. With overall review of JOCV program, it is possible to improve background researches and request findings by encouraged understanding to JOCV program by recipient countries, by dispatch plans based on the actual needs of recipient countries, by smooth cooperation between overseas offices and the JOCV secretariat, by enhancement of the sense of achievement by each volunteer, by improvement of communications between volunteers and their counterparts of recipient countries and by provision of better working conditions for coordinators, all of which will eventually have a good impact on the “contribution to the socio-economical development of recipient countries” and the “promotion of international friendship and bi-lateral relationship”.

4-1-3. Impact and Sustainability of JOCV program

Although there are obvious sayings that “each dispatch of JOCV volunteers may be self-completing type (or independent project type)” and “it is difficult to expect sustainability of a host agency”, it is essential to consider impact or sustainability as a factor of contribution to the socio-economical development of recipient countries. The study revealed that the potential of JOCVs to bring about some positive impacts and sustainability is not well utilized.

Tendency of low impact and sustainability appears particularly in the dispatch of “manpower supply type”. According to analysis of questionnaires and case studies, volunteers dispatched in manpower supply type can obtain better sense of achievement than the other types (“guidance type” and “joint action type”), a demand for this type is higher, and working conditions for volunteers are better. On the other hand, it is difficult for volunteers of this type to achieve an overall goal (impact) and sustainability, which they desire to do but eventually they tend to be unsatisfied with. This is caused by different understanding about JOCV program, between JOCVs and recipient agencies. In fact, no clear classification of dispatch types is expressly provided, and this is thought to cause a difference in conception of JOCV between JOCV and recipient agencies.

It is estimated that the number of volunteers to be dispatched in manpower supply type will either remain almost same or gradually increase in the future because of the strong needs for this type of dispatch among recipient countries. Therefore it is time for JOVC to review this manpower supply type positively as well to search for measures to provide a greater impact of its
activities and sustain such impact for a longer period, taking its past performances into consideration.

4-2. Enhancement of international friendship and bi-lateral relationship

Evaluation and analysis of the “promotion of international friendship and bi-lateral relationship” are conducted based on the following check items A and B.

The international friendship in JOCV program starts when JOCVs make contact with the local people of recipient countries. Such JOCVs play an important role in direct delivery of information about Japan especially to the people at grass-roots level. In this study, the potential needs for international friendship are confirmed. In some countries, JOCV program is a major means to communicate with the Japanese people. Thus, it is confirmed that JOCV has made contribution to deepen mutual understanding between recipient countries and Japan and to promote bi-lateral relationships. With deepening mutual understanding between recipient countries and Japan, Japan can find the potential needs of final beneficiaries and contribute more efficiently and effectively to recipient countries. In addition, if the people of recipient countries deepen their understanding about the Japanese people through JOCV activities, Japan’s ODA may possibly change its image from “aid of an economically rich country” to “cooperation by the people of Japan” or “aid with visibility”. JOCV is now pursuing international friendship on the basis of voluntary activities of individual persons without any clear-cut objective nor policy to promote its program. It is, therefore, necessary to consider all of the people of recipient countries and promote their understanding about Japanese culture and thoughts. It is particularly important to communicate continuously with the people at grass-roots level, as JOCVs have some advantages to do so.
JOCVs and the local people of recipient countries have established friendship in many forms. Every individual volunteer has tried, during his/her term of service, to learn local language, culture, art and sports in order to understand the local people. By such endeavor of each volunteer to deepen mutual understanding with the people at grass-roots level as JOCV program, JOCV deserve a credit for its contribution to deepening Japanese people’s understanding about recipient countries as well as their friendship with the countries through exchange of personnel. Nevertheless, such international communications and mutual understanding are limited to individual volunteers, and JOCV program itself has little contributed to direct communications between Japanese non-JOCVs and the local people of recipient countries.

As a member of the international community, Japan is required to disseminate more information about Japan and receive more information from other countries in order to develop friendly relationships with them. The JOCV program offers opportunities for Japan and other countries to deliver and receive live information that is not available through TV and books. Although not clearly defined in JOCV program, effectiveness of the program to the “international friendship and promotion of bi-lateral relationship” is well acknowledged both within and outside of Japan. In order to develop current individual-level activities of communications to nation-to-nation friendship, JOCV program should set its own policy, purpose and objective of “international friendship and promotion of bi-lateral relationship” and develop its program in future.

4-3. Development of human resources of Japanese youth and return of the developed resources to Japanese society

Evaluation and analysis of the “development of human resources of Japanese youth and return of the developed resources to Japanese society” are conducted based on the following check items A, B and C.
In JOCV program, ex-volunteers are regarded as valuable human resources for Japanese society who have developed their own capacities during two-year cooperative activities in developing countries. JOCV has been engaged in assisting ex-volunteers, especially in career development and employment in Japanese society, expecting they may play active roles in various fields and return their experience to the society. “Salmon Campaign” is one of the educational campaigns carried out by JOCV to make Japanese people informed of international development and cooperation, as it is considered a part of return of human resources to Japanese society. Although the “development of human resources of Japanese youth and return of their developed resources to Japanese society” is not expressly stated as an objective of JOCV, it is carrying out a part of JOCV program such as assisting program for ex-volunteers.

On the other hand, some ex-volunteers are struggling to convey their experience back to the society. Difficulty in employment is one example. Some friction occurs when they try to introduce other different cultures or diversified values to Japanese society. It indicates that Japanese society is still immature to accept full of ex-volunteers’ experience. It is, therefore, necessary to improve understanding of the Japanese people about JOCV program and promote education of their international understanding, so that Japanese society may properly evaluate experience of ex-volunteers and accept many different views.

Chapter 5. Suggestion

As a result of this evaluation research, the following suggestions are provided.

5–1. Express presentation of program objectives of JOCV program
The following issues are necessary to be presented as JOCV program objectives in and outside of Japan; “A. Contribution to the socio-economic development of recipient countries”, “B. Promotion of international friendship and bi-lateral relationship” and “C. Development of human resources of Japanese youth and return of their developed resources to Japanese society”. At the same time, JOCV must concretely show to the people of Japan its basic philosophy as a program as a governmental program and its position in ODA program.

“A. Contribution to the socio-economic development of recipient countries” is the only purpose of JOCV program described in the JICA Laws. However, taking the needs of recipient countries and Japan into consideration, the other two items, “B. Promotion of international friendship” and “C. Development of human resources of Japanese youth and return of their developed resources to Japanese society” can also be considered as the objectives of JOCV program. It is because these three objectives are the expected outcomes to be realized, and, at the same time, these are not independent from each other but rather interconnected. If some measures are taken for improving the objective A, this would induce positive effects in the objective B and C. It is, therefore, necessary to present expressly these three as the program objectives and incorporate them into future JOCV program.

(1) Background study of requests for correct comprehension of needs.

Many troubles of JOCV activities are caused by incidents at the request stage of JOCV. It is necessary to have a wide discussion about possible methods to execute background survey of requests made by recipient countries, and to search for a system to meet the diverse needs in and outside of Japan.

In order to contribute effectively and efficiently to achieve the objective of “Contribution to the socio-economic development of recipient countries”, the volunteers who are working on site must attain more effective achievement. According to interviews with JOCVs, they have a tendency to attain their objectives when there are needs, clear understanding of and acknowledgement for JOCV activities in the recipient agency. For correct comprehension of the needs of recipient countries, basic facilities including training and employment of local staff, posting of personnel specialized in background studies, and collaboration with experts are necessary to be promptly set up for more satisfactory background studies of the requests. At the same time, it is necessary to conduct background studies in participation of personnel from both recipient countries and Japan by means of keeping constant contact and dialogue among the Japanese embassies, local offices of JICA and recipient agencies.

(2) Systematization of participation modes, and flexibility to satisfy variety of needs correctly

Even in the same type of job, characters of JOCV activities are varied according to participation form and posting in recipient agencies. It is recommended to systematize the characteristics of
JOCV’s activities by reviewing JOCV’s performance in the past. Then, results of the review are necessary to be utilized in making more effective and efficient dispatch plan.

Judging from JOCV’s performance for 35 years, it is recommended to clarify the participatory modes as well as activity modes of JOCVs. It is also worth to execute dispatches in different ways according to the types of JOCV, for example, guidance type, manpower supply type or joint action type.

Systematization of JOCV activities by characteristics and making effective dispatch plans are necessary for accepting increasingly diversifying requests.

(3) More effective dispatch plan

Perception of importance of JOCV and needs for it are different depending on countries and regions. It is necessary to make a countrywide or region-wide dispatch plan consistent with the strategy and direction of foreign policy in each recipient country or region, while technical and intellectual levels of JOCV members must be strictly assessed.

As mentioned in (1) and (2) above, JOCV program could be executed in accordance with the needs of both Japan and recipient countries when the objectives and modes of JOCV program are clear enough to make more effective dispatch plan. Each dispatch plan is desired to conform to the recipient’s development strategy and other major issues. On the other hand, it is also necessary to give volunteers ample scope to explore various needs of recipient countries other than the given dispatch plan. The important thing is to consider, from the planning stage, all important issues such as socio-economic features, Japan’s policy of cooperation, advantages of JOCV and others, and to check whether each dispatch will fulfill the purpose of JOCV to assist recipient countries tackling their important developing issues and whether it will make full use of JOCV’s advantages.

5-2. Establishment of evaluation policy and evaluation method

Many JOCVs or ex-volunteers consider “their activities must be evaluated and the result must be made public”. In future, “evaluation” could be incorporated in JOCV program to provide information taken from evaluation results to the public. At the same time, improvement of evaluation method is necessary to realize satisfactory feedback of the information to current JOCV program for more effective JOCV program.

According to interviews with JOCVs, about 80% of them think that evaluations must be conducted and the result should be open to the public. Evaluation has two purposes: (1) assuring accountability and (2) improving the quality of cooperation. As demand for transparency and efficiency of ODA is increasing in Japan, importance of evaluation is rapidly rising. Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct evaluation of JOCV program.
Through the evaluation and publication, JOCV program could be widely understood by the public. The evaluation could also contribute to more effective implementation of the program by feeding the lessons learned back to the current program. This is the first evaluation study of JOCV program, and is recommended to be continued with its improved methods in future.

5-3. Feedback of JOCV experience to Japanese society

Many JOCV members feel that they have learned more than they have transferred. Establishment of a new system is essential in order to accumulate and publish the information gathered by JOCVs, so that grass-roots level information and experience of the JOCVs could be utilized for international education of Japanese people and for globalization of Japanese local governments. At the same time, possibility to apply such information and experience to other cooperation schemes of Japan may be considered.

There are some cases for return of experienced JOCVs to the society, for example, as an officer in local governments, a teacher at school, a staff in the development education field known as “Salmon Campaign” conducted for public education for international understanding. However, what they gained during two years service is not only experience but also information which is not efficiently used. The information is accumulated in reports written by JOCVs and submitted to JICA offices, local agencies and their successors. As the reports are written only for internal use, the information contained is not very easy for the public to access. Of concern is to establish a system which enables storage of information gathered by JOCVs and timely delivery of the information through Internet, being categorized by country and type of JOCVs. This system should be open to the public, and can be used for background studies of requests made by recipient countries and also for other ODA schemes.

Another system is necessary for ex-volunteers who has returned to Japan from his/her services abroad and is desired to continue providing concerned services and information in Japan. For example, an ex-JOVC who has worked as an in-service teacher is expected in Japan to be engaged in preparation of guidelines and other materials for education of Japanese people for international understanding and development cooperation.

5-4. Promotion of development and utilization of human resources of JOCVs

(1) Development of human resources

Although many ex-volunteers of JOCV program want to work in the field of international cooperation, it is not easy to get a related job. Given current employment situation that can hardly get better, improvement of quality of JOCVs could be one essential solution. The supporting system for JOCVs during their assignment is to be established for their better professional skills of cooperation methods and language, as that for ex-JOVCs is going to be facilitated.
Interviews to ex-volunteers revealed that they are facing difficulty in finding jobs related to international cooperation despite of their wish. Not a few of the volunteers have become interested in the field of international cooperation by participating in JOCV program and have intention to find jobs in that field. However, related associations and private companies are limited and the recently reduced ODA budget makes the employment market of ODA related jobs tighter than ever. Given those, improvement of the quality of JOCV volunteers is more and more required.

Although training system and seminars for ex-volunteers are going to be improved, little attention is paid to on-site volunteers. JOCV program should take advantage of its past experience and develop a cooperation method to improve professional skills of JOCVs on site.

(2) Utilization of human resources

It is necessary to draw the people’s attention to the discussion on proper utilization of JOCVs after they complete their mission. To do this, most useful methods are to provide information about JOCV program, including its role and policy in overall ODA scheme, and to publicize JOCV’s activities both on site and after completion. Appropriate evaluation of ex-volunteers in the society is indispensable for the society to accept them. It is expected that JOCV program will be established as a familiar and fully participatory program to the people of Japan.

In order to make JOCV program more popular, it must gain the people’s approval by means of clearly understandable presentation of its basic policies. Principles and objectives, as well as its expected role in overall ODA scheme. After completion of those presentations in the society, individual activities of JOCVs must be introduced to the public. In future, JOCV program is desired to be popular among the Japanese people. Practically, it may possibly be considered to establish a system where each ex-volunteer is obligated to make some positive contribution to the globalization of local societies.

It can be said that JOCV program is the most comprehensible program among ODA schemes in Japan, because its activities are carried out through direct contact with the local people of recipient countries. JOCVs should have positive communications with the public in Japan to explain their activities, the role and basic policy of JOCV program, so that JOCV program may be better understood by the public as a more familiar program than expected. The better understanding of JOCV program and more appreciation of JOCVs will lead to realization of the society where human resources of ex-JOCV are fully utilized.