

Evaluation of JICA Volunteer Program for 4th Medium-Term plan

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Japan International Cooperation Agency
Secretariat of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

This summary report compiles the analysis of the achievements and results of the JICA Volunteer Program in the term of 4th medium-term plan (JFY2017 – JFY2021). Information and data used for the analysis was collected through on-site surveys and JICA overseas offices, etc.

1. Objectives of JICA Volunteer Program Evaluation

- The JICA Volunteer Program evaluation is carried out with two objectives: 1) making further improvements to the JICA Volunteer Program by using the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Action) cycle for projects, and 2) ensuring that the program is accountable to Japanese citizens and external stakeholders, including partner countries.

2. Perspectives in Evaluating JICA Volunteer Program

- The evaluation of the JICA Volunteer Program confirms the extent to which the program objectives have been achieved in terms of three evaluation perspectives:
 - 1) Cooperation in economic and social development, as well as reconstruction of developing countries,
 - 2) Promotion of international goodwill and deepening mutual understanding,
 - 3) Giving back the volunteer experience to society.
- In addition to three perspectives, the effect in developing human resources is also evaluated as an indirect effect of the JICA Volunteer Program.

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2. Perspectives in Evaluating JICA Volunteer Program

| Perspectives | Evaluation items | Main indicators |
|---|---|---|
| 【Perspective 1】 Cooperation in economic and social development, as well as reconstruction of developing countries | Status of contributions to development issues | 1) Extent to address development issues and priority areas in partner countries 2) Fulfillment rate of high-priority requests 3) Status of achievement of individual volunteer's activity goals 4) Status of achievement of "expected outcomes" set for each priority areas (goals) |
| 【Perspective 2】 Promotion of international goodwill and deepening mutual understanding | 1) Promotion of partner country's understanding of Japan | 1) Host organizations' understanding of Japan and Japanese people 2) Beneficiaries' understanding of Japan and Japanese people 3) Partner country's governmental organizations and government officials' understanding of and trust in Japan and Japanese people |
| | 2) Promotion of Japanese understanding of partner country | 1) JICA volunteers' understanding of country to which they are dispatched and the people of that country 2) Achievements and effect of disseminating information to Japan by JICA volunteers 3) Japanese government officials' understanding of the partner country through JICA volunteers |
| 【Perspective 3】 Giving back the volunteer experience to society | Giving back the volunteer experience to society | 1) Status of the volunteers' implementation of activities giving back to society after returning to Japan 2) Extent of volunteers' participation in and contributions to society after returning to Japan |
| 【Indirect effect】 Effect in developing human resources | Effect in developing human resources | Changes in volunteers' awareness, actions and improvements in their abilities and qualifications before and after returning to Japan |



Features of JICA Volunteer Program during the evaluation period (JFY2017 – JFY2021)

Features of JICA Volunteer Program in the term from JFY 2017 to JFY2021 relevant to the program evaluation are as follows.

1. JICA developed “General Guidelines for Evaluations of the JICA Volunteer Programs” in JFY2018, and the program has been evaluated since JFY2019 according to the guideline.
2. Due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, all JICA volunteers were evacuated and temporarily returned to Japan from mid-March to late April 2020. As the situation of the global COVID-19 pandemic had been gradually settled, the JICA volunteers started to be dispatched from November 2020 and volunteers were dispatched to near around 40 countries as of March 31, 2022.
3. There were many social contribution activities by the volunteers who had been evacuated to Japan. They had actively worked on their own initiative and gave back their volunteer experiences to the society with JICA’s assistance.
4. Due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, recruitment and selection for new volunteers in 2020 was canceled. In 2021, spring recruitment and selection was resumed, but autumn recruitment and selection was canceled due to the re-expansion of COVID-19.
5. As the commitment of Japanese government for the Olympic and Paralympics Games Tokyo 2020, the number of dispatch plans of the Job categories regarding “Sports” had been increased. It had been achieved as planned before the global pandemic of COVID-19.

1. Status of contributions to development issues

(1) Extent to which plan for JICA Volunteer Program addressed development issues and priority areas in partner countries

- Conformance rate is the percentage of the JICA volunteers dispatch requests which conformed with development issues and priority areas of development cooperation policy of the partner countries.
- The rate from JFY2017 to JFY2021 were fluctuated from 70 to 80 %.
- The country-basis JICA volunteer dispatch plans generally matched the development cooperation policy of the country.
- The plans in “Others” includes sports, education, health, IT etc. and those were expected to produce sufficient results that make use of the characteristics of JICA Volunteer Program.

| | Conformance rate | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | FY2017 | FY2018 | FY2019 | FY2020 | FY2021 |
| No. of conformed request | 2,338 | 2,193 | 2,374 | N/A | 625 |
| Total No. of request | 3,202 | 2,931 | 2,899 | N/A | 845 |
| Conformance rate | 73.0% | 74.8% | 81.9% | N/A | 74.0% |

(2) Fulfillment rate

【Fulfillment Rate by Priority】

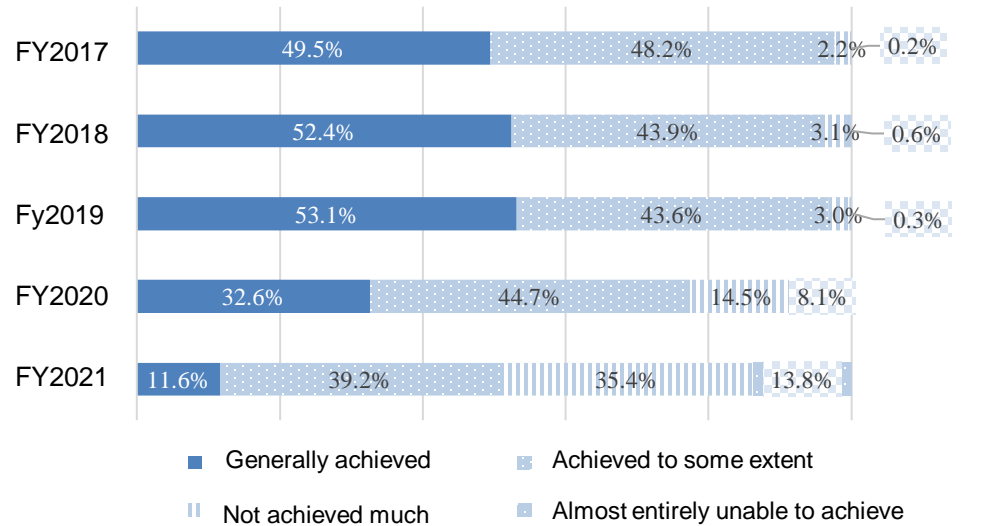
“Fulfillment Rate by Priority” (Rate of securing successful applicants for the requests) started to be calculated from JFY2019. However, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, country-specific program plans in JFY 2020 and FY2021 was not written as usual, and many countries did not make prioritization from A to C to their plans. Thus, the rate was not evaluated in the 4th medium term-plan evaluation.

(3) Status of achievement of individual volunteer's activity goals

Data on the achievement status of "individual volunteers' activity goals" (the goal was agreed among volunteers, host organization and JICA overseas office) was collected by each JICA overseas office at the end of the volunteers' dispatch. This data is used for the analysis.

- From JFY2017 to JFY2019, the result shows high achievements; more than 95% of volunteers responded as "Generally achieved" or "Achieved to some extent", and nearly 50% responded as "Generally achieved".
- On the other hands, the volunteers who responded "Generally achieved" or "Achieved to some extent" was significantly decreased in JFY2020, which was less than 80%. The same rate decreased to about 50% in JFY2021.

Status of achievement of individual volunteer's activity goals



FY2017 : n=552, FY2018 : n=1244, FY2019 : n=1,133, FY2020 : n=1,057, FY2021: n=189

Source : "FY2021 JOCVs' status of achievement of activity goals and mutual understanding" provided by JOCV secretariat

- The global coronavirus pandemic is considered as one of the factors affected the result of achievement status. The following 4 reasons were raised by the respondents as "Not achieved very much" or "Almost entirely unable to achieve". Article 1) or 2) are based on responses from volunteers who ended their term of service in Japan without being able to return to their assigned countries after being evacuated due to the spread of COVID-19. Article 3) or 4) are based on the responses of volunteers who had a short period of activity after being re-assigned, or who were unable to perform sufficient activities due to restrictions on movement to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- 1) The term of dispatch was too short and to make their activity plan.
- 2) The term of dispatch was too short to implement activities as planned.
- 3) The term of dispatch was too short to achieve activity goals.
- 4) The restriction on movement on-site caused limitation of their activities.

Promotion of international goodwill and deepening mutual understanding

1. Promotion of partner country's understanding of Japan / 2. Promotion of Japan's understanding of partner country

1. Promotion of partner country's understanding of Japan

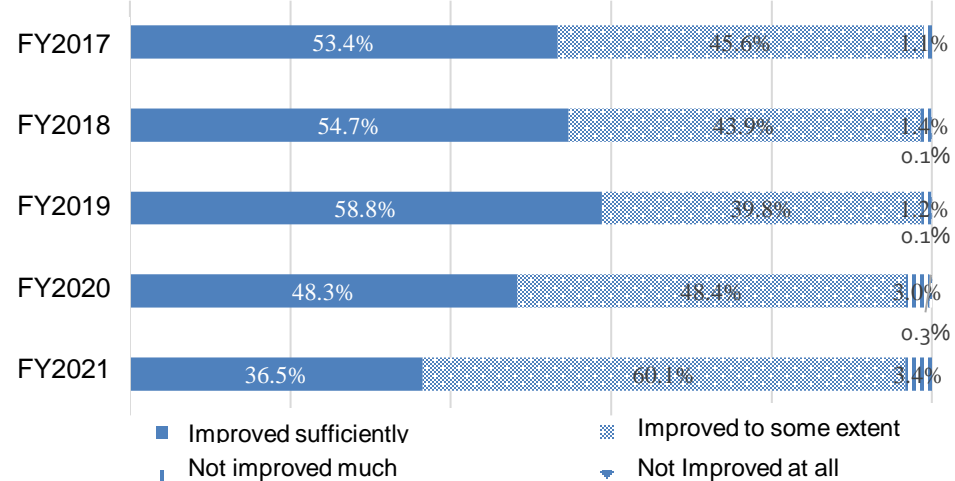
When the volunteers' term ends, the host organization was interviewed on their understanding of Japan and Japanese people.

- Until JFY2019, around 98% of respondents felt "improved sufficiently" and "improved to some extent", which was great achievement. Since 2020, the same rate had been more than 90%, which had been slightly decreased.
- Until JFY2019, the rate of respondents who felt "improved sufficiently" had been more than 50%. However, the rate was decreased to be less than 50% in JFY2020 and less than 40% in JFY2021.
- The decrease in the opportunities to communicate among the volunteers and the host organization due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, could have an impact.

2. Promotion of Japan's understanding of partner country

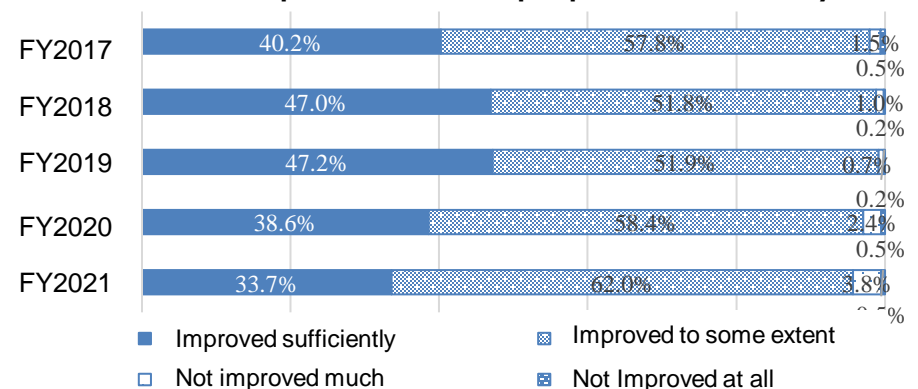
- At the end of JOCVs' term of service, a survey was conducted to see whether their understanding of the country where they were dispatched, and the people of that country had been promoted.
- Until JFY2019, around 98% of respondents felt "improved sufficiently" and "improved to some extent", which was great achievement. Since 2020, the same rate had been more than 95%, which had been slightly decreased.
- Until JFY2019, the rate of respondents who felt improved sufficiently had been more than 40%. However, the rate was decreased less than 40% in both JFY 2020 and JFY2021.
- Difficulty in conducting volunteers' activities in the dispatching country due to the spread of Covid-19, could have an impact of the result above.
- Volunteers actively disseminated information to Japan through SNS, blogs and etc., contributing to the promotion of understanding of partner countries among the Japanese people.

Host organizations' understanding of Japan and Japanese people



FY2017 : n=551, FY2018 : n=1,244, FY2019 : n=1,130, FY2020 : n=1045, FY2021 : n=178
 Source : "FY2021 JOCVs' status of achievement of activity goals and mutual understanding" provided by JOCV secretariat

JOCVs' understanding of country to which they are dispatched and the people of that country



FY2017 : n=547, FY2018 : n=1,243, FY2019 : n=1,144, FY2020 : n=1,328, FY2021 : n=208
 Source : "FY2021 JOCVs' status of achievement of activity goals and mutual understanding" provided by JOCV secretariat

Perspective 3: Giving back the volunteer experience to society

3. Social contribution activities by returned volunteers

(1) JICA's International Cooperation Delivery Class

JICA's International Cooperation Delivery Class is one of the efforts to give back the volunteer experience to society. This is an activity in which returned volunteers are introduced as instructors to inform the situation in developing countries, their relationship with Japan and international cooperation to people in Japan.

- The number of classes delivered by returning volunteers is usually more than 1,000, but in JFY2020, the number dropped to about 800 due to the impact of COVID-19. As a result, the approximate number of participants became less than 100,000.
- In JFY2021, the number of delivery classes and participants recovered to some extent.

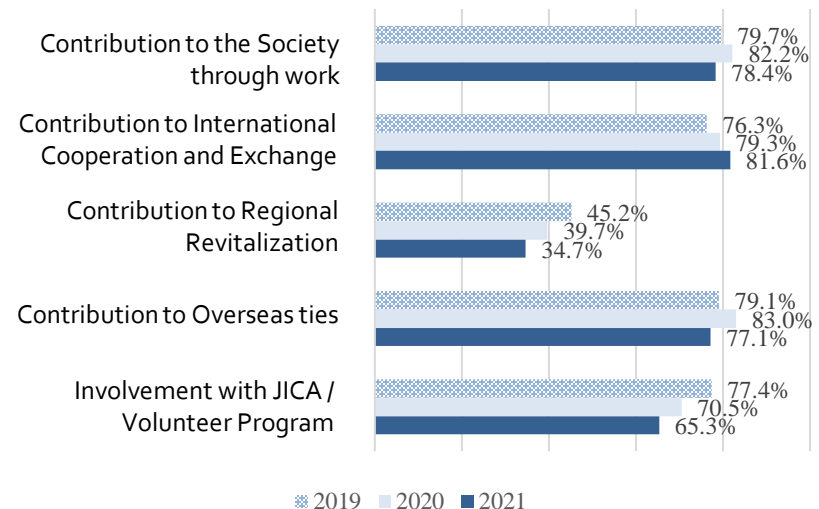
Number of Delivery Classes provided by returning volunteers and Number of participants

| FY | Delivery Classes | |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | Number of Classes | No. of Participants |
| 2017 | 1,784 | 150,966 |
| 2018 | 1,758 | 199,737 |
| 2019 | 1,323 | 124,506 |
| 2020 | 816 | 75,131 |
| 2021 | 1,282 | 116,444 |

Source : Report to Domestic Operations Department (2021) provided by JOCV secretariat

(2) Social contribution activities by volunteers for the fifth years after returning to Japan

- Every fiscal year since JFY2019, JICA has conducted a questionnaire survey of volunteers for the fifth years after returning to Japan (JFY2015, JFY2016 and JFY2017). The focus of the questionnaire was their social contribution activities in five categories shown in the chart on the right.
- Many returned volunteers have done some kind of social contribution activities.
- "Contribution to society through work," "Contribution to international cooperation and exchange," and "Contribution to international connections" tend to be relatively high.



FY2019 : n=177, FY2020 : n=353, FY2021 : n=245

Source : Compiled by the Evaluation Team from questionnaire data on "Social contribution activities by returned volunteers in FY2021"

(3) Social contribution activities by volunteers who temporarily returned to Japan after evacuating

- JICA conducted a special pre-dispatch training for the volunteers who temporarily returned to Japan after evacuating due to the impact of COVID-19. The training aimed to make them contribute to tackling domestic challenges. As a result, many of them contributed to the revitalization of local communities.

Effect on human resource development

As an indirect effect of Volunteer Program, JICA set 19 items as qualifications and abilities to be improved through the volunteer experience. Every fiscal year since JFY2019, JICA has conducted a questionnaire survey for the volunteers just after returning to Japan, and those for the fifth year after returning to Japan (JFY2015, JFY2016, JFY2017). The objectives of the questionnaire was to determine whether these 19 qualifications and abilities changed before and after the dispatch, and whether they have demonstrated them after returning to Japan. The table shows the percentage of respondents who chose “Improved” in response to the three options of “Improved”, “No change”, and “Declined”. The table also shows the percentages of respondents who answered that “I am demonstrating my abilities to a great extent”, “I am demonstrating my abilities to some extent”, “I am not demonstrating my abilities to a great extent”, and “I am not demonstrating my abilities at all” out of the four options.

Survey results from returned volunteers in FY2019-FY2021

| Qualification and Abilities | Improvement of qualities and abilities | | | Demonstration of qualities and abilities | | |
|---|--|-------|-------|--|-------|--------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
| 1. Independence | 74.1% | 66.4% | 71.7% | 91.5% | 89.3% | 90.6% |
| 2. Ability to encourage others | 66.3% | 58.9% | 62.3% | 78.3% | 71.1% | 79.2% |
| 3. Ability to execute | 68.5% | 61.3% | 60.4% | 85.9% | 84.9% | 92.5% |
| 4. Ability to identify issues | 69.3% | 67.9% | 67.9% | 91.5% | 87.2% | 92.5% |
| 5. Ability to plan | 59.1% | 54.1% | 49.1% | 76.8% | 76.2% | 84.9% |
| 6. Creativity | 60.6% | 53.4% | 69.8% | 75.3% | 69.4% | 88.7% |
| 7. Ability to convey message | 69.9% | 55.7% | 69.8% | 77.3% | 72.6% | 86.8% |
| 8. Ability to listen attentively | 64.8% | 63.0% | 62.3% | 89.4% | 89.4% | 92.5% |
| 9. Flexibility | 87.3% | 77.9% | 81.1% | 94.9% | 93.0% | 100.0% |
| 10. Ability to ascertain current conditions | 73.5% | 68.5% | 64.2% | 91.4% | 90.8% | 94.3% |
| 11. Discipline | 35.8% | 36.5% | 36.5% | 74.9% | 85.3% | 92.3% |
| 12. Ability to control stress | 65.7% | 61.6% | 65.4% | 88.4% | 86.7% | 98.1% |
| 13. Communication skills in foreign languages | 89.2% | 82.2% | 88.5% | 88.9% | 72.0% | 82.7% |
| 14. Ability to understand and utilize a different culture | 91.0% | 86.2% | 84.6% | 95.5% | 90.5% | 98.1% |
| 15. Ability to adapt to local conditions | 78.9% | 68.7% | 67.3% | 87.4% | 83.1% | 90.4% |
| 16. Risk management | 66.3% | 66.4% | 59.6% | 81.4% | 83.7% | 82.7% |
| 17. Ability to stay resilient | 72.7% | 65.0% | 67.3% | 91.0% | 88.7% | 90.4% |
| 18. Self-esteem | 62.4% | 56.2% | 57.7% | 78.9% | 79.7% | 86.5% |
| 19. Awareness of social contribution | 66.1% | 70.4% | 61.5% | 85.9% | 89.0% | 88.5% |

Effect on human resource development

- The majority of respondents answered that they had improved in most of the qualities and abilities. In particular, a relatively large number of respondents recognized improvement of “Communication skills in foreign languages”, “Ability to understand and utilize a different culture” and “Flexibility”
- Even for “discipline”, for which the percentage of respondents who answered “improved” was low at around 30%, more than 70% answered “improved” when asked about the degree to which they had demonstrated it. The reason for this may be that the originally disciplined members were sent to developing countries, where discipline is not necessarily a priority, and their discipline may not have “improved” in there.
- As mentioned above, the “Achievement against Activity Goals” of the JFY2021 returned volunteers is relatively low, but 14 items in the “Demonstrated” category are higher than in the previous two fiscal years. This is considered to be an indication that they used a variety of qualities and abilities in the midst of the restrictions of the activity and movements due to the spread of COVID-19. In addition, the increase in “creativity” among the qualities and abilities can also be seen as a result of the various creative and inventive activities.

Summary

The period of the 4th Medium-term Plan greatly affected by the impact of COVID-19. In March 2020, all volunteers dispatched around the world temporarily returned to Japan. As of March 2023, the dispatch resumed, but its scale has not yet recovered to the level before the spread of COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on three perspectives is summarize below.

- **Perspective 1: Cooperation in economic and social development, as well as reconstruction of developing countries:** Before COVID-19 crisis, planning of the dispatches was well prepared to contribute to solving development issues in partner counties, selection and dispatch of a certain number of volunteers was achieved, and many volunteers achieved their activity goals. However, these had been greatly negatively impacted by COVID-19.
- **Perspective 2: Promotion of international goodwill and deepening mutual understanding:** Great achievement was observed before COVID-19 crisis, but it had also slightly negative impact due to COVID-19 crisis.
- **Perspective 3: Giving back the volunteer experience to society:** Volunteers who temporarily returned to Japan due to COVID-19 participated in many social contribution activities in Japan with the support of JICA.
- **Effect on human resource development:** Many of the participants felt that they had “improved” or “demonstrated” the 19 qualities and abilities set by JICA through their experiences as volunteer members, and that they had “demonstrated” them at the end of their activities. The results also suggest that the participants’ abilities such as “creativity” were enhanced as they continued their activities with creativity and ingenuity under the circumstances where they could not do their activities as they expected due to the severe restriction of their activities caused by COVID-19 crisis.

From the above, it can be concluded that before JFY2019, when there was no COVID-19, JICA Volunteer Program had achieved its objectives, but the COVID-19 crisis created major difficulties in implementing the Program. Since then, it has been under gradually recovering process.