

A Bridge Between Japan and the World

Japan Centers were envisioned in 1998 as bases for fostering human resources and developing human networks with Japan in countries that are transitioning to a market economy. Each Japan Center strives to be open as widely as possible by serving business people, government workers, students, and ordinary citizens.

There are presently nine centers in eight countries, including, in order of date of launch, Viet Nam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), Laos, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Kyrgyz, Myanmar, and Cambodia. Japan Centers are expected to continue to play a role in enhancing exchange and mutual understanding among the people of Japan and these eight nations, and people from all countries involved are

through books, audiovisual materials, and the Internet, and likewise communicates local information back to Japan.

The business courses target the private-sector business people and entrepreneurs who drive their coun-



Japanese and local residents participate together in a taiko drumming demonstration.

Exchange activities transmit two-way information on culture, traditional events, lifestyles, society, and the economy.

similarly called upon to actively take part in this endeavor.

Three Main Activities for Developing Human Resources and Promoting Mutual Understanding

Each Japan Center focuses on three main activities: (1) business courses for the development of human resources, (2) language courses for promoting Japanese language study, and (3) exchange activities for promoting mutual understanding between Japan and the host country. The Japan Center also provides information on Japan to local residents

try's economy. They share Japan's management know-how through lectures that cover such themes as market principles based on Japan's experience and the importance of industrial policies. Also offered are practical on-site guidance and workshops on topics like production control, the "five S's" (sort, straighten, scrub, standardize, sustain), and *kaizen* (improvement).

The business courses also promote self-action on the part of the participants. In Mongolia, trainees who returned from Japan wanting to make use of what they had learned over the half-year course formed an NGO called the *Kaizen* Association that facilitates self-help among corporations. Working in cooperation with the local Japan Center, they now strive to convey Japan's experience to corporate managers by sponsoring business seminars and inviting Japanese lecturers to regional towns. In Viet Nam, participants who returned home after receiving training in Japan are now providing on-the-spot instruction on the "five S's" and other aspects of management that they studied.

Japanese language courses are conducted with the aim of deepening the participants' understanding of Japan. They are also designed to help expand opportunities for learners to use Japanese language skills in careers or for further education in Japan. An example of this is the special class on guide work that was held in July 2005 for intermediate-level students in Vientiane, Laos. In addition to learning how to introduce the city's major sightseeing spots in Japanese, students practiced giving mock tours to Japanese people. Trainees returning from language study in Japan can also take part in these courses.

Exchange activities transmit two-way information on culture, traditional events, lifestyles, society, and the economy to promote mutual understanding between citizens of Japan and the host country. The centers offer a number of exchange events that involve citizens of both countries, all of which serve to increase goodwill.

In November 2005, the Japan Center in Kyrgyz sponsored a satellite-based videoconference linking participants in that country and Japan. So many people attended the conference that seating quickly ran out and much of the audience had to stand. The success of this event indicates the great level of interest that young people in Kyrgyz have for learning more about the lifestyle and thinking of young Japanese.

That same month, the Japan

demonstration of *taiko* drumming and screenings of Japanese movies. There were workshops on *ikebana* (flower arrangement), kimono wearing, and calligraphy, as well as a



Practical workshops deepen participants' understanding of Japanese-style management.

"gourmet road" that featured Japanese dishes. All the programs at this two-day event were filled to capacity, and a large number of Kazakhstanis were able to experience various aspects of Japanese culture.

Active Participation by Returning Trainees

JICA hopes that the people who have received training in Japan will participate in Japan Center activities in their respective countries. By retaining their connection with Japan after returning home, these people will help to deepen the relationship between Japan and their own country and will also exert a positive influence on other students and participants.

The Japan Centers have something to offer to all returning trainees, ranging from those who wish to make use of their experiences in Japan to start a business to people who desire to continue their studies in Japanese language and culture, as well as those who want to interact with Japanese people



Demand for courses to improve computer literacy increases each year.

Center in Kazakhstan held an open house to commemorate its second anniversary. Various cultural exchange events were held, including a

or form networks with other participants interested in Japan. JICA hopes that the Japan Centers will attract even greater attention as hubs for people and information related to Japan.