

# **History and Perspective of JICA Partnership Program in Chugoku Region: Trend Analysis of Grass-Root International Cooperation and Case Study from the Viewpoint of Regional Characteristics**

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JICA Partnership Program is a part of Japanese Official Development Assistance, which is implemented by local governments, public organizations, NGOs/NPOs, universities, and etc. Its emphasis is on the grass-root initiative to solve development challenges through the partnership between local organizations in Japan and its counterparts in developing countries. This paper reviewed 69 JICA Partnership Programs, which JICA Chugoku Center has sponsored since 2003. The broad research question is why local actors in the Chugoku region proposed these programs with reference to regional characteristics in each prefecture. The paper revealed this question through a quick portfolio review of implemented programs. Moreover, this paper asked what triggered local actors to propose these programs, what they obtained through the programs, and what kind of mutual relationships they had as the results of the programs. The paper adopted a case study method using interviews and documentary reviews for the analysis of programs. With this, this paper aimed to analyze grass-root international cooperation from the perspective of regional characteristics.

This paper found that programs implemented by local governments have reflected their policy priorities in the case of Tottori, Shimane, and Hiroshima; in Okayama, instead of the Okayama prefecture, NGOs, universities, social welfare corporations have implemented programs mainly in Medical and Nursing sector. In Shimane, municipalities with specific local characteristics have implemented programs in the field of “Making of Japanese traditional paper, Washi”, “Art education”, and “Project-Based Learning (PBL)”.

A case study revealed that there are commonalities among organizations in Medical and Nursing sectors in Okayama, while there exists differences in their interventions depending on its historical background. High-level human network among those implementation organizations matters to knowledge sharing at both official and informal occasions. This paper suggested that we need to understand

not only individual programs but also broader context including prefectures' policies, regional characteristics, and network among local organizations. It also suggested that sharing and understanding the history and perspective behind the program between local partners and JICA would add values of JICA Partnership Program.