

## MIGRATION PATHWAYS

# Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)

### Overview

The Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) is a temporary labor program that is available to small and medium-size enterprises in Japan, most of which hire trainees for low-paid work. The program is novel because its premise is to serve as an international development tool rather than a labor or immigration policy.

### Why was it started?

TITP was established in 1993 to promote international development by transferring skills, technologies, and knowledge from Japan to developing regions. Historically, Japan has not allowed low-paid foreign laborers to work in Japan. The founding document of the TITP clearly states that “technical training shall not be conducted as a means of adjusting labor supply and demand.” This principle notwithstanding, many observers claim that TITP serves as a de facto guestworker program.

### How does it work?

TITP allows foreign trainees to work in various sectors (146 jobs in 82 sectors) to gain practical skills and receive a salary. The training period is a maximum of five years. In addition to professional training, trainees receive Japanese language instruction.

Trainees can be accepted in two ways. Businesses can accept interns from overseas subsidiaries, joint ventures, or trading partners.

*Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit [GSP.cgdev.org](https://GSP.cgdev.org).*



Country of Destination  
**JAPAN**

Country of Origin  
**BANGLADESH, CAMBODIA, CHINA, INDIA, INDONESIA, LAOS, PAKISTAN, PERU, THE PHILIPPINES, MYANMAR, MONGOLIA, NEPAL, SRI LANKA, THAILAND, UZBEKISTAN, AND VIETNAM**

Skill  
**82 SECTORS (MOST COMMON ARE ASSEMBLY, WELDING, AND CONSTRUCTION)**

Skill Level  
**LOW**

Timeline  
**1993–ONGOING**

Beneficiaries  
**ABOUT 300,000**

Nonprofit organizations and employer associations can accept trainees for placement at affiliated enterprises. More than 90 percent of interns fall into the second category.

In 2019, 308,489 foreign trainees worked in Japan, many at small businesses in rural areas. Trainees work in assembly and welding (21 percent), construction (18 percent), food-processing (18 percent), and other sectors. Sector employment tends to fall along gender lines, with most women trainees assigned to textiles and food-processing and most men assigned to heavy industry and construction.

## What impact has it had?

The program has transferred skills to Thailand and Laos. One study found that employment of trainees increased firm productivity in Japan, although no systematic evaluation of the program across the Japanese economy has been conducted.

In April 2019, the Government of Japan created the Specified Skilled Worker program, through the amended Immigration Control Act. The program enables TITP participants to transition to residency, along with other foreign workers in the 14 specified industry sectors. It is unclear how this program will affect the objective of the TITP.

## Further readings

For more information, see the [Japanese Government Technical Intern Training Program website](#).

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