

# Overview: Promotion of Country-specific and Issue-specific Approaches

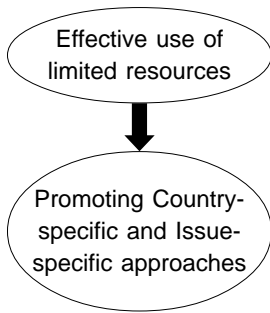
## 1. Background and Purpose of the Study

### 1-1 National and International Context

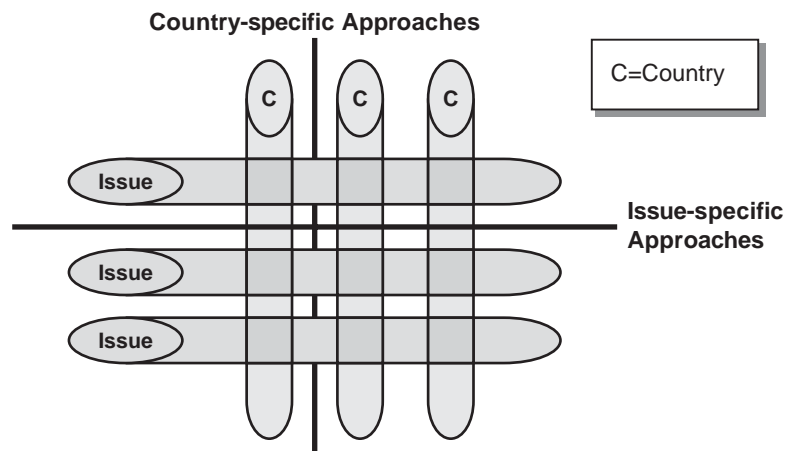
There is a growing trend in today's field of international aid to encourage more effective utilization of finite development resources to meet the increasingly diversified, complicated, and globalized needs of developing countries. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Sector Program (SP) are examples of collaborative efforts of aid donors tackling such development issues. Facing a limited ODA budget, JICA has been under pressure to carry out more effective and efficient cooperation activities. Accordingly, the promotion of country-specific and issue-specific activities is stressed to meet the various needs of developing countries.

Figure 1 shows the correlation between country-specific and issue-specific approaches. A proper mix of approaches is critical for effective cooperation activities. Major aid donors such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) already employ and promote country-specific and issue-specific approaches when drafting aid plans and strategies.

**Figure 1 Country-specific and Issue-specific Approaches**



Promotion of an appropriate mix of approaches required for effective cooperation



## 1-2 JICA's Activities to adopt Country-specific and Issue-specific Approaches

JICA adopts a country-specific approach by drafting JICA Country Programs and conducting JICA Project Request Surveys. The set-up of Regional Departments has adjusted the institution's framework toward these approaches. In addition, JICA has established the Agency Thematic Network to accumulate thematic knowledge and experience. The Agency Thematic Network will create JICA Thematic Guidelines to cope with major development issues<sup>1</sup>. These guidelines are to be utilized in formulating JICA Country Programs and in examining requested projects (See Figure 1 and 2).

## 1-3 JICA's Challenges

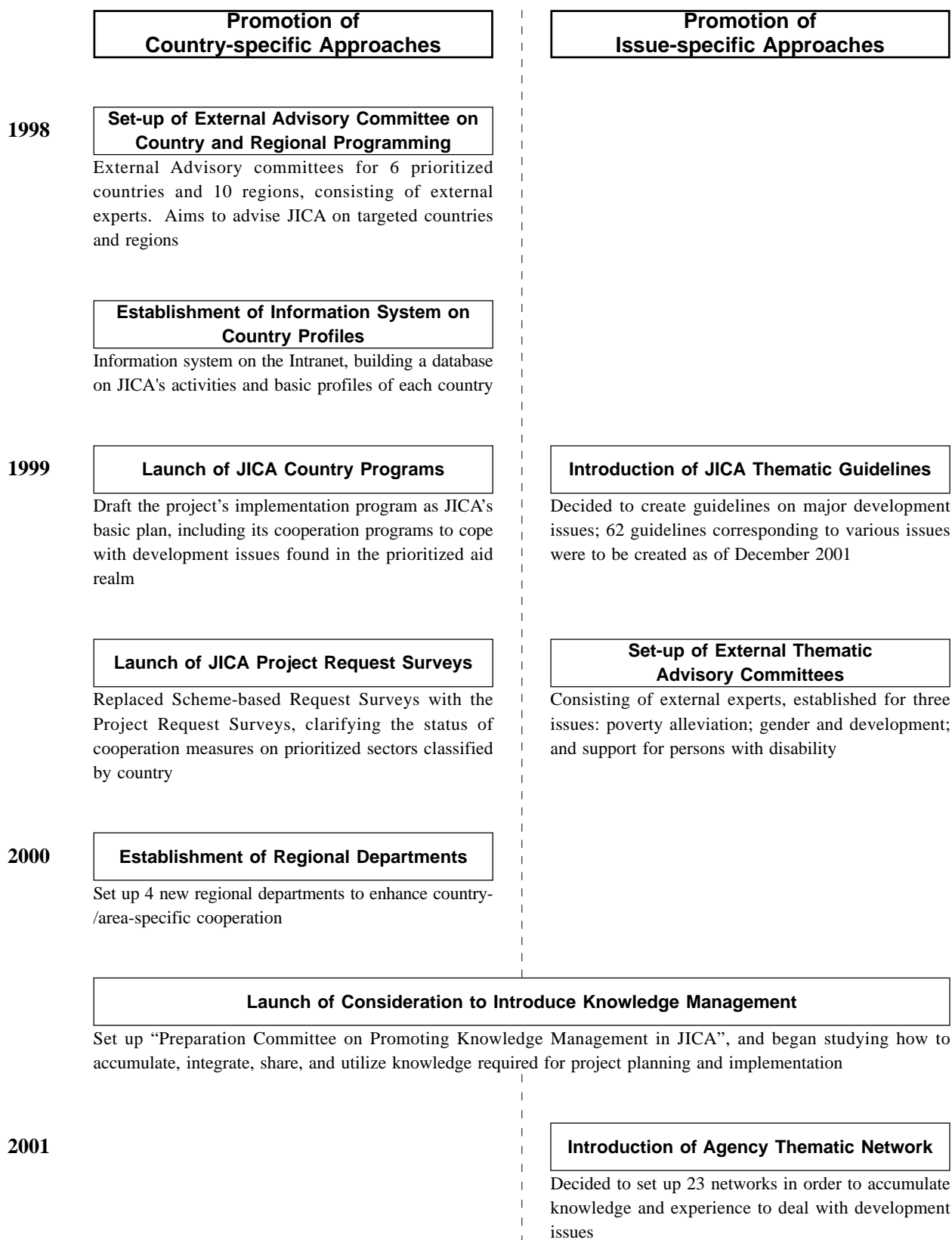
Some JICA Country Programs may not yet be an effective cooperation plan for several reasons. Firstly, the extent of development issues in Programs varies widely. Secondly, the logic which formulates aid programs and projects from development issues is different for every country. Also, some JICA Country Programs are still a mere combination or categorization of current and previous projects, rather than a careful study of the relationship between "goals (outcomes)" and "means (activities)". The lack of a systematic understanding of development issues prevents the effective implementation of JICA Country Programs. Limited personnel in overseas offices can compound these problems, especially when the staff attempts to handle issues of which they do not have the necessary expertise to solve.

Logical drafting of JICA Country Programs based on a systematic understanding of issues is crucial for efficient and effective implementation and evaluation.

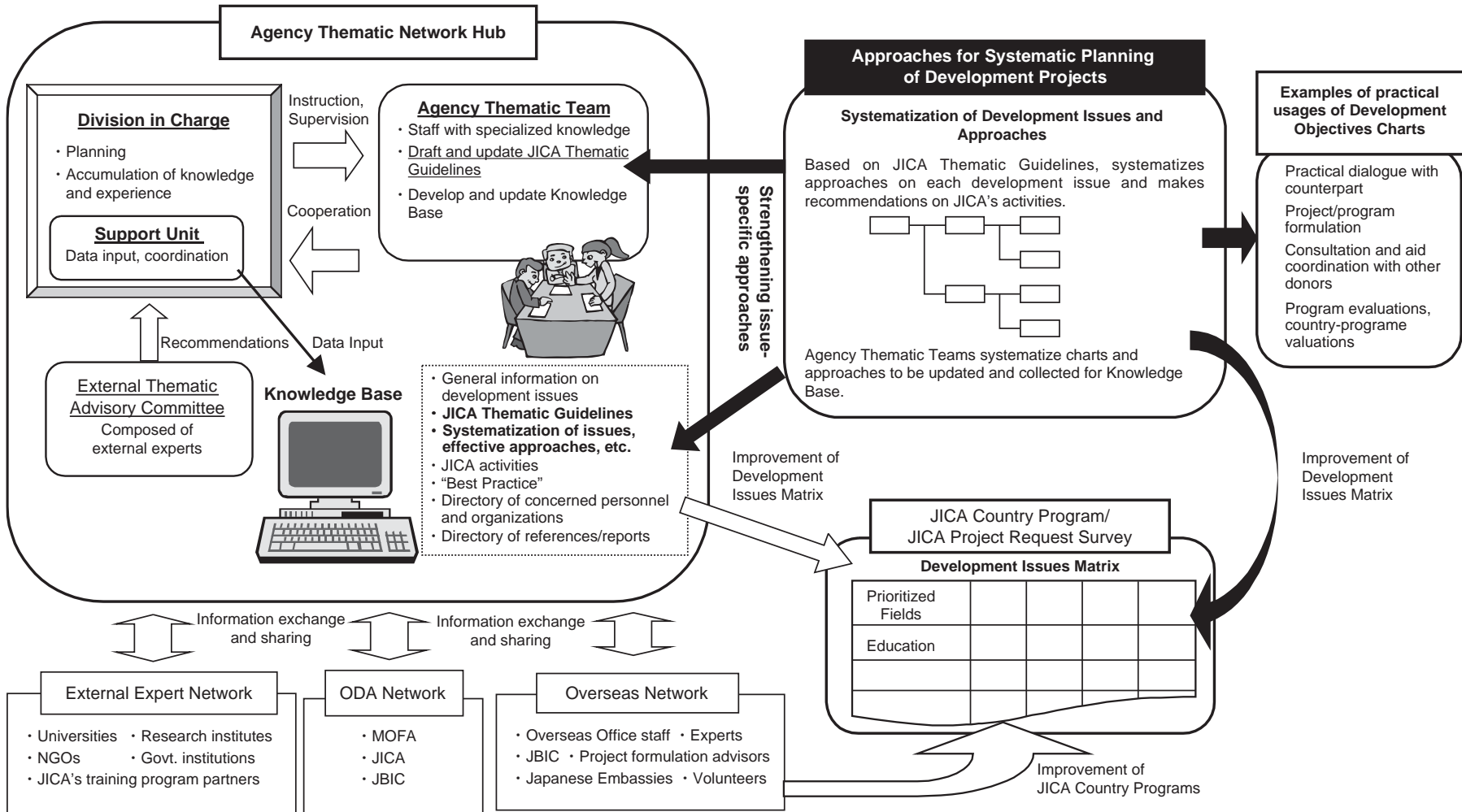
Formulating appropriate programs and projects based on an understanding of development issues and effective approaches are indispensable for the improvement of a JICA Country Program. JICA must therefore clarify its programs for targeted countries by applying a systematic approach for each development issue to each country's actual situation. This systematization of issues will be covered by JICA Thematic Guidelines. It is important to systematize the formulation methods of programs and projects by selecting development issues from prioritized sectors and then incorporate them into JICA Thematic Guidelines.

<sup>1</sup> 23 of Agency Thematic Networks are to draft 62 of JICA Thematic Guidelines as of July 2001.

**Figure 2 Chronicle of JICA’s Promotion of Country-specific and Issue-specific Approaches**



**Figure 3 Correlation Diagram of JICA's Measures on Promoting Country-specific and Issue-specific Approaches**



Better quality project evaluations as well as feedback of project results are critical for carrying out more efficient and effective cooperation projects.<sup>2</sup> Despite considerable experience with project evaluations, JICA has just begun to establish evaluation methods for country-program and thematic-program. JICA must improve the quality of country-program and thematic evaluations and use the results for better project formulation. Studies on evaluation indicators and methods will contribute to this. JICA has to evaluate feasibility and effects of its activities, based on Development Objective Matrices that clarify the relationship between “goals (outcomes)” and “means (activities)”.

As an independent administrative agency, JICA is required to be more accountable for its own performance.

The cabinet decision of December 19, 2001 on the “Reorganization and Rationalization Plan for Special Public Institutions” resulted in JICA’s conversion to an Independent Administrative Agency in a few years. JICA’s transformation from a Special Public Institution to an Independent Administrative Agency has enhanced its evaluation methods. Independent Administrative Agencies are now obliged to report their work and evaluations in mid-term and annual plans; namely, to run on ‘outcome-oriented project management’. For outcome-oriented program management, JICA has to formulate outcome-predictable plans and implement, monitor, and evaluate projects.

#### 1-4 Goals of the Study

This study is designed to promote country-specific approaches by enhancing issue-specific approaches; and to effectively cope with prioritized overseas development issues. Four major development issues (basic education, HIV/AIDS, promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and rural development)<sup>3</sup> are systematized, and their Development Objectives Charts in which effective approach methods are presented have been created. In addition, the charts illustrate indicators that need to be referred to in planning, monitoring, and evaluating JICA’s activities. The study also analyzes JICA’s activities, introduces major projects, and examines fundamental issues. These issues were selected because the drafting of JICA Thematic Guidelines of them have been completed<sup>4</sup>. These designated issues are selected from four major sectors:

Matrices have been drafted on issues such as basic education, HIV/AIDS, rural development, and promotion of SMEs.

<sup>2</sup> Aid Evaluation Reviewing Panel & the Working Committee for Evaluation Research (2000)

<sup>3</sup> Although the targeted development issues initially included ‘ecosystem conservation’, this report does not actually cover this issue. The study group decided to reflect the systematization of this issue into the current guideline.

<sup>4</sup> However, the issue of ‘rural development’ needs more examination. The issue must be sorted and systematized according to guidelines of ‘rural development’ and ‘poverty alleviation’ hereafter since the report was drafted before this process was completed.

education; health and medical care; agricultural and rural development; and promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). These sectors are highly prioritized in many JICA Country Programs.

Four major issues have been taken up as examples in this study. In a similar way, all issues should be systematized when the systematization is considered useful. Incidentally, the study's mid-term draft has received a number of favorable comments, such as "The systematization of development is quite useful, and the number of issues to be considered should be increased". We shall try to satisfy such requests as above.

## 2. Development Objectives Chart

### 2-1 Structure of Development Objectives Chart

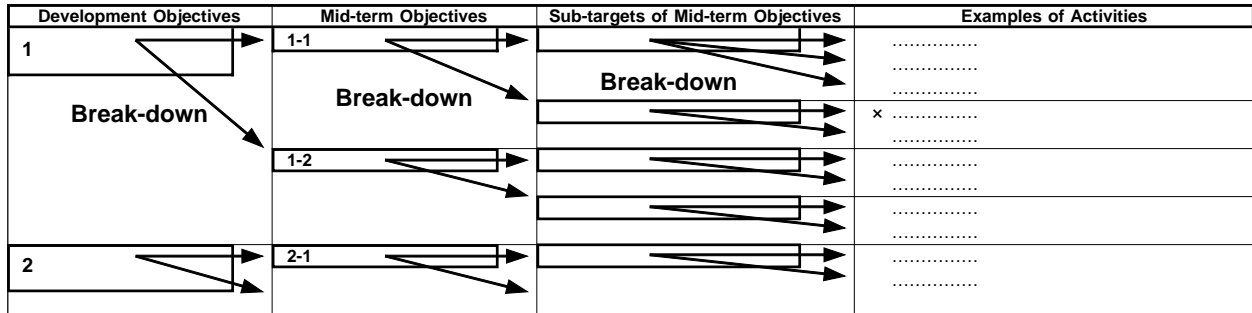
For a comprehensive systematization of the structure of development issues and possible approaches to them, a Development Objectives Chart has been used to break down the four main issues into Objectives, Mid-term objectives, Sub-targets of Mid-term objectives and Examples of Activities Project. The Chart also shows the association between 'goals-means'. Each symbol, "○", "◐", "◑", and "×", shown at the columns of "Examples of Activities", indicates how often JICA has implemented relevant projects. (Some examples are included which cannot be done by donors.) Symbols are classified as follows:

- : JICA has considerable experience
- ◐ : JICA has certain experience
- ◑ : JICA has experience as a component of projects
- × : JICA has little experience.

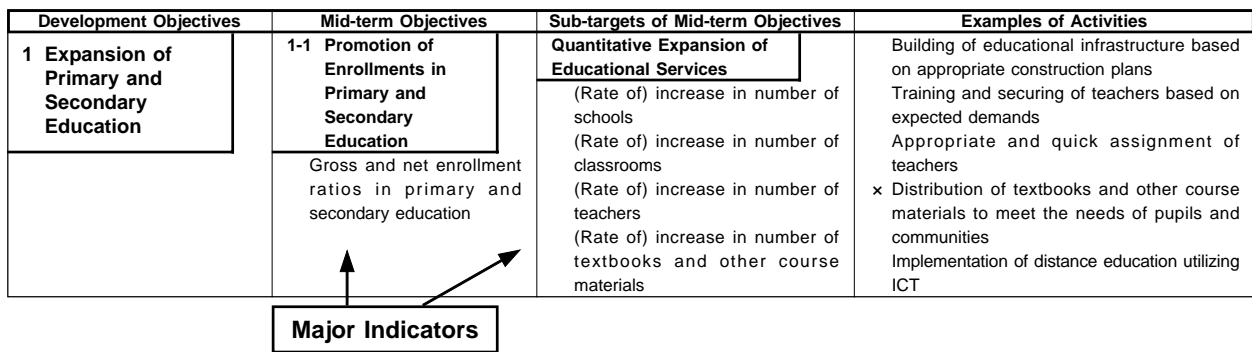
In Figure 4, each column shows the breakdown of an issue into "Development Objectives", "Mid-term Objectives", and "Sub-targets of Mid-term Objectives". Figure 5 is a sample Development Objectives Chart. A complete chart covering all items ranging from "Development Objectives" to "Examples of Activities" is annexed.

**Figure 4 Development Objectives Chart**

(Logical structure of a chart)

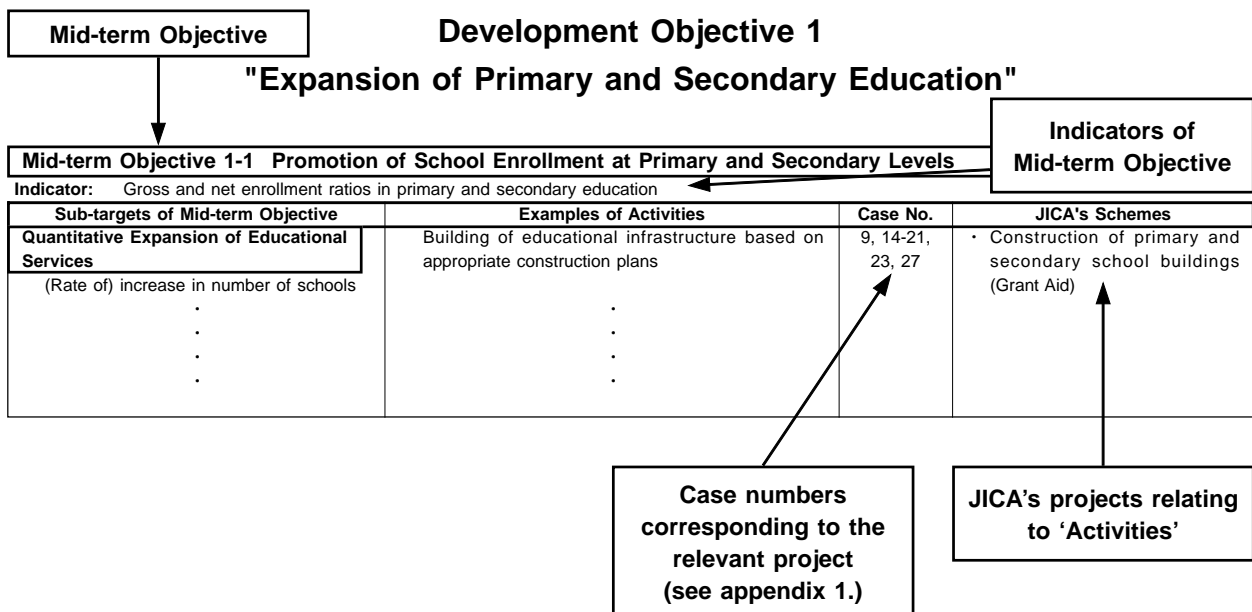


(Sample of a Development Objectives Chart)



\*Circled numbers imply major indicators

**Figure 5 Sample of a Development Objectives Chart**



## 2-2 Significance of the Study Report

In order to illustrate entire development issues, this report presents a comprehensive chart that includes some non-prioritized issues within JICA. Based on this premise, the study group has made some suggestions on JICA’s prioritized projects.

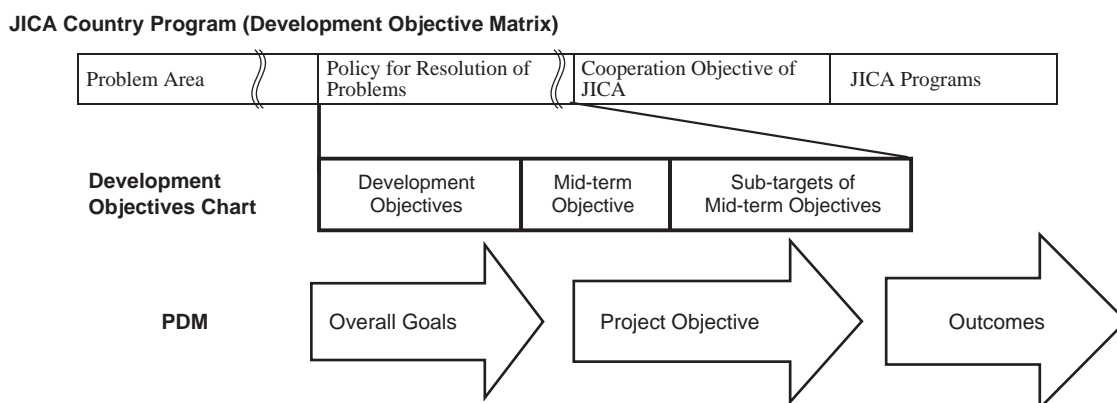
This report is to be incorporated in the following JICA Thematic Guidelines and developed by a Agency Thematic Network.

**The outcome of this study report will be incorporated into JICA Thematic Guidelines and JICA’s Knowledge Base. It will then be reviewed and upgraded periodically by Agency Thematic Network based on future lessons from cooperation projects and studies.** Some theme study teams or divisions, however, have already started to create and consider JICA Thematic Guidelines. The study group hopes that the creation and review of guidelines are expected to be in keeping with the group’s recommendations.

## 2-3 Relationship between the Development Objectives Chart, JICA Country Program, and Project Design Matrix (PDM)

Generally, the relationship between the Development Objectives Chart and JICA Country Program varies depending on the specific conditions of each country and sector. Each “Development Issues”, “Development Objectives”, “Mid-term Objectives” and “Sub-targets of Mid-term Objectives” in a Development Objectives Chart is a breakdown of “Policy and Directivity for Issue Solution” of a Development Objective Matrix in a JICA Country Program. The target corresponding to “Development Issue” in the Development Objective Matrix should be determined after scrutinizing the extent of development in each country.

**Figure 6 Relationship between JICA Country Program, Development Objectives Chart, and PDM**



Source: Kazuhide Nagasawa produced for this study.



While an overall goal stated in the Project Design Matrix (PDM) of each project supposedly corresponds to a Development Objectives or Mid-term Objective on a Development Objectives Chart, a project objective corresponds to Mid-term Objectives or Sub-targets of Mid-term Objectives (See Figure 6). Basically, the level of an overall goal or project objective varies depending on the scale of the project as well as the nature of the issue. However, it is critical to clarify program theories and maintain the consistency of the PDM between a JICA Country Program and each project, according to the Development Objectives Chart.

### 3. How to Apply the Development Objectives Chart

A systematic understanding of development issues enables effective cooperation and can bring about multiple applications according to the cases. For instance, a Development Objectives Chart can be utilized for formulating a JICA Country Program, having a practical dialogue with counterparts, studying and preparing projects, aid coordination and evaluation. The following section presents various ways of applying the Development Objectives Chart.

#### 3-1 Formulation of JICA Country Program and Working-level Dialogue with Counterparts

The ordinary process of making JICA Country Programs is as follows:

Comprehend the present situation of a targeted country and the general view of an issue by scrutinizing major indicators;

Synthetically consider policies of a targeted country, Japan's assistance priorities, and other donor aid/assistance trends, and then specify prioritized aid sectors;

Draw up the most effective means of cooperation in a targeted sector.

How to use a chart to formulate a JICA Country Program:

- Refer to indicators to understand the situation
- Basis for selecting better approaches
- Basic tool for evaluations and consideration for improvement plans

When trying to comprehend the current state of a targeted country as in , “Major indicators” cited in the Development Objectives Chart are helpful. For effective assistance measures as in , a Development Objectives Chart functions as basic data. Formulation of effective assistance measures will require the creation of the most feasible program for the targeted country, based on a profound understanding of the structure of development issues as well as full consideration of various possible approaches, rather than merely combining

feasible projects. A Development Objectives Chart provides a worthwhile basis for understanding development issues and approaches.

A Chart is also beneficial when revising a JICA Country Program. A full understanding of the outcomes of previous cooperation activities through the monitoring and evaluation of major indicators is required to improve a JICA Country Program. Appropriate indicators can be selected out of those stated in the Development Objectives Chart. In addition, when the monitoring or evaluation results are unfavorable, the appropriateness of approach can be reviewed and the proposal for revising a JICA Country Program can also be considered.

**Box 1: Utilization of a Development Objectives Chart by overseas staff (basic education)**

Image 1: Modification of a JICA Country Program

Staff A: Although both the Development Objective Matrix and Project Rolling Plan in a JICA Country Program show “Improvement of Basic Education” as one of the prioritized aid sectors, I remember that we are mostly involved in school building construction projects through Grant Aid. As the report says, many children have not been able to study in school even though a considerable number of facilities have been prepared. Shall we try to create a new program by combining a Development Study on the ‘Improvement of the Educational Environment for Children’ and a Community Empowerment Program for educating parents?



Use the chart as presentation material to acquaint counterparts with JICA's views at working-level dialogue

Meanwhile, the Development Objectives Chart may be useful when explaining JICA's views to a counterpart at a working-level dialogue. Needless to say, we have to create assistance programs in prioritized sectors through consultations with counterparts with a full understanding of the program's issues and needs, as well as the feasibility of measures to be carried out by the counterpart. At a working-level dialogue, we must introduce our views to the counterpart, reconcile any differences, and agree on subsequent measures. If a chart on existing development issues and possible approaches is presented, the counterpart's understanding of our views and cooperation measures can be clarified.

**Box 2: Utilization of a Development Objectives Chart by overseas staff (basic education)**

Image 2: Comments on PRSP

When asked to give comments on a PRSP draft by counterparts...

Staff B: The part of 'Education' included in the 'Sector-specific Strategy' of this draft PRSP mentions that 'Reduction of gender disparity in education' is a prioritized issue, but we do not have any specific measures. The Development Objectives Chart of 'Basic Education' says that we are supposed to conduct analytical surveys on the curricula and textbooks from a gender point of view as well as opinion surveys targeting parents. How about mentioning some of these points in the draft, saying whether a targeted country has gone through with a review on those points, what kind of results are expected, and, if not, whether a review is planned. Based on actual circumstances, I think JICA should consider a follow-up through the Dispatch of Experts on 'Instruction for gender-sensitive school education' under the framework of an ongoing Project-type Technical Cooperation, the Project on Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education.



Design adequate programs and projects, regarding project formulation and preliminary evaluation based on a chart

**3-2 Consideration and Preparation of Individual Project**

When considering cooperation on development issues, the appropriateness of cooperation and estimates of outcomes must be figured out. This applies to project formulation studies (or request surveys) as well as studies of the contents of programs and individual projects. The activities and input that programs require and the information to make a decision on what kinds of projects would work most effectively should be investigated. A Development Objectives Chart can be utilized as a basic preliminary tool on project formulation because it systematizes the association between goals (outcomes) and means (activities). It also illustrates major Examples of Activities on development objectives.

Use as reference materials in presenting views in a donor meeting

**3-3 Aid Coordination**

A Development Objectives Chart is also expected to function as a basic reference material to explain views and provide comments to counterparts in a donor meeting. Since there are many occasions of cooperation between donors on such as PRSP or SP issues, harmonizing cooperation activities through consultation with other donors is desirable. It is very important to clearly present our cooperation policy with a comprehensive understanding of development issues and to acquaint other donors with it at an international conference or in consultation with other donors. Furthermore, an organized logic based on a systematic understanding of development issues will provide the basis for plausible comments on other donor's opinions. We hope this

study report will be useful reference material for aid coordination.

### 3-4 Evaluation

A Development Objective Chart systematizing “goals-means”, works as a basis of evaluation

A Chart that specifies the association between goals (outcomes) and means (activities) provides a basis for evaluating the appropriateness of evaluation and outcomes of cooperation activities. The study report of the ODA Evaluation Study Group<sup>5</sup>, submitted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in February 2001, emphasized the necessity of development of policy-level evaluation and program-level evaluation<sup>6</sup> as well as enhancing project evaluations. The report upholds the importance of creating a development objectives chart, evaluation indicators, and monitoring methods at the policy and program planning levels. Basically, a program is equivalent to a cluster of projects that share ‘a common goal’. Today, however, there are a remarkable number of cases in which the association between goals (outcomes) and means (activities) is blurred because neither the ‘common goal’ nor the significance of each project to the overall objective is well structured. Therefore, cooperation plans must be formulated and implemented by maintaining consistency between goals and means according to a standard Development Objectives Chart while evaluating the appropriateness of a plan and outcomes of cooperation by applying appropriate indicators. Creating and revising the Development Objectives Chart to suit the actual circumstances of a targeted country and then using it to draw up JICA Country Programs will result in better cooperation activities.

Furthermore, it will also be necessary to evaluate whether an individual project is realizing the overall objective, by referring to the standard Development Objectives Chart.

## 4. Perspectives on Future Assistance

Examining JICA’s experience and future issues, this study focuses on systematizing four major issues, i.e., basic education, anti-HIV/AIDS measures, promotion of SMEs, and rural development. The following section suggests

<sup>5</sup> The ODA Evaluation Study Group was set up as a subordinate to the Aid Evaluation Reviewing Panel, a private advisory body to the Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in July 2000. Prof. Hiromitsu Muta of the Tokyo Institute of Technology chairs this group.

<sup>6</sup> Program-level evaluation mentioned above means one way to comprehensively evaluate over multiple projects with a common goal. It contains sectoral and issue-specific evaluations as well as country-specific evaluation of JICA and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) projects.

perspectives for further development of issue-specific approaches. Special attention should hereafter be paid towards developing issue-specific approaches, increasing the number of targeted issues, accumulating experience and know-how, gaining a common understanding of development issues by personnel concerned development and systematization of appropriate indicators.

#### **4-1 Development of Issue-specific Approaches**

Agency Thematic Network should take charge of increasing targeted issues and collecting experience and know-how.

In order to promote issue-specific approaches, a Development Objectives Chart needs to be incorporated into a JICA Thematic Guideline and the number of targeted issues increased. In addition to a chart, a list of precedents that can be referred to for future activities is required, while major indicators and checklists of targeted countries need to be further developed. These should be revised continuously in accordance with the results of project formulation studies and various types of evaluation. Agency Thematic Network should be responsible for accumulating information on development issues, and a designated division should monitor the accumulation of information.

The Agency Thematic Network should also scrutinize prioritized aid sectors, in which Japan can take advantage of its own aid resources and experience, or in which Japan should promote projects even if there is limited operational experience. It must then also make efforts to improve outcomes of cooperation activities on the prioritized issues by means of systematizing, accumulating, and sharing knowledge and experience of the prioritized aid sectors. To realize this, Agency Thematic Networks are expected to continue promoting studies on Japan's experience, systematization and modeling of experience for cooperation.

JICA staff and experts, should be acquainted with this issue-specific approach through its training program. Dispatching a member of Agency Thematic Team as a lecturer to such a training program will not only enrich the program contents but also bring valuable experience and liveliness to the Team. The Personnel Division or Planning and Coordination Division should be in charge of considering how to utilize these materials and human resources.

#### **4-2 Common Understanding on Development Objectives**

Share policy on development issues with relevant domestic and overseas personnel

Prior to cooperation, policy on development issues, including a Development Objectives Chart, should be shared with relevant aid organizations, rather than each devising its own policy. Moreover, it would be ideal for collaborative cooperation activities based on a common understanding of

development issues. In the domestic sphere, consultations with MOFA and JBIC are crucial in harmonizing recognition on development issues and cooperation activities which consistently follow the principles of Japan's ODA. Further announcement of JICA's policy will result in the development of information-sharing with concerned bodies and personnel, by means of publicizing information in the Development Objectives Chart on JICA's web site and initiating discussions.

When there is success in gaining country's cooperation, a Development Objectives Chart should be drafted reflecting the specific circumstances of the country through consultations with counterparts, as well as other major donors, and assistance should be provided based on the chart. PRSPs and Sector Programs are part of a trend, whereby both an aid-recipient country and major donors harmonize and formulate development plans on a country or sector. According to this trend, the development aid staff and their counterparts of the developing countries should tackle development issues together while systematizing development issues unique to a targeted country and creating a common understanding of them.

### 4-3 Systematizing Indicators and Setting Targets

Institutional accumulation of relevant data by evaluation study enables to determine appropriate indicators

Appropriate indicators enable accurate monitoring and understanding of a targeted country's circumstances as well as accurate implementation of evaluations.<sup>7</sup> Appropriate indicators cannot be determined without institutional accumulation of data collected through evaluation surveys and should be flexibly applied according to the objectives and conditions of the target country or area. Although a Development Objectives Chart presents as many indicators as the study group can come up with, all indicators are not necessarily utilized for monitoring and evaluation activities. Thus, a number of appropriate indicators should be adopted depending on objectives of cooperation activity. Since the number or kind of accessible data is limited in some countries, one has to confirm whether designated data is accessible when selecting indicators. Some indicators are useful even based on existing data, while others require special data to be collected through extra surveys. The former may contain data often too broad to be used for measuring outcomes of a project since it may provide just a general picture. The latter is often costly to collect and may require

<sup>7</sup> Adoption of indicators allows objective evaluation results to be attained, while presentation in quantitative figures enables observation over comparisons and chronicled changes. Furthermore, evaluation results are made accountable to relevant personnel and taxpayers.

careful consideration of cost effectiveness. Listed below are a number of conditions, which indicators must satisfy. The sorting of appropriate indicators by each issue and country should be performed while taking into account these conditions.

**<Conditions for Indicators<sup>8</sup>>**

- Manifestation of goals (outcomes)
- Different from output (result) indicators
- Actually measurable
- Measurable with low cost
- Measurable over time
- Presented in a straightforward manner

Target setting is as crucial as indicator selection. When targets are set at a high level, the appropriateness of a setting may not be agreed upon, whilst low targets may not allow agreement on project implementation. Targets are determined based on various factors ranging from beneficiary's needs, best practices (benchmarking), and averages of the overall body to outcome-added (increment). The proper target setting methods should be determined depending on local circumstances and project goals. Major target settings methods are presented in Box 3.

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<sup>8</sup> Ono, Tatsuya & Tabuchi, Yukiko (2001)

### **Box 3: How to set targets**

#### **1) Target setting corresponding to beneficiary needs**

Set a numerical target corresponding to the beneficiary's needs. A project manager should supply beneficiaries with the required information so that appropriate numerical targets can be set.

#### **2) Target setting according to 'best practice'**

Set targets at the same level as a similar successful project, also called 'benchmarking'. JICA should promote further usage of benchmarking by collecting successful examples of similar projects. The JICA's Knowledge Management System being introduced will work to collect this information. In order to fully utilize past experiences, effective lessons and approaches as well as numerical targets resulting from previous successful examples should be reviewed frequently.

#### **3) Target setting according to the averages of the overall body**

Set the same level of numerical target as the averages of the overall body of a targeted area (nation or prefecture). Although average figures of an overall body likely change depending on external factors including economic conditions and climate changes, a targeted area is assumed to be influenced by external factors, as is the overall body. By comparing indicators of a targeted area to that of its overall body, measuring can be immune (although not necessarily perfectly), from influences of external factors. Therefore, target setting according to the averages of the overall body provides relatively accurate predictions of outcomes.

#### **4) Setting targets according to outcome-added (increments)**

First, assume figures at a certain point which may manifest by following a current trend. Then, add it to the predictions from projected outcomes. In this way, targets can be calculated. However, reliable figures corresponding to outcome-added cannot be calculated without previous data of similar realms.

*Produced by Kazuhide Nagasawa, based on Ryo Sasaki (2000)*



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