

Chapter 2 ● Response by JICA to the Secondary Evaluation Results by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation

JICA tries to widely share the secondary evaluation results and recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation through the Evaluation Study Committee, the primary body promoting evaluation in JICA, and the evaluation chiefs in charge of project management in each department. This section includes the actions that JICA will take based upon the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation to use evaluation to enhance evaluation quality and improve its undertakings.

2-1 Response by JICA

(1) “Evaluability in Project Planning and Management” and “Quality Improvements of Evaluation Reports”

Making sure a project can be evaluated, so-called “Evaluability”, is a major concern at JICA. Projects are hard to evaluate when a project plan has unclear project purposes and weak logic, making it difficult to measure whether a project purpose was achieved and whether there is a causal connection with the outputs and activities of the project. JICA recognizes this problem and has made efforts to improve it by enhancing planning capability and reinforcing the evaluation on appropriateness of plans in ex-ante evaluation. JICA also tries to review plans or implementation processes when necessary using monitoring and mid-term evaluation.

Along with a consistent and integrated evaluation system from ex-ante and ex-post stage, particularly by the introduction of ex-ante evaluation, considerable improvement has been observed in projects currently underway in setting project purposes and in composing a logical framework that shows what the project stands for. Nonetheless, JICA realizes more is needed. Based upon the secondary evaluation results, JICA continues making efforts on both planning and evaluations to make its cooperation more effective and efficient.

These efforts includes planning, that enhances project findings and formulation by strengthening JICA overseas offices, as well as expanding preliminary studies and improved screening to develop more appropriate project plans.

For evaluations, JICA incorporated past recommendations made in “Clarification of Project Purpose”, “Im-

provements of Project Management by Mid-term Evaluation and Monitoring”, and “Quality Improvement of Evaluation Report” in the JICA Evaluation Guidelines revised in February 2004 (for details, refer to 2-4 “Developing and Improving Evaluation Methods”, Chapter 2, Part 1).

JICA intends to put these into practice when doing actual evaluations by disseminating these recommended improvements through evaluation training introduced in 2003 for JICA staff in accordance with the revised Guidelines.

(2) “Evaluation Guidebook”

The above-mentioned revised JICA Evaluation Guidelines include many case examples and “frequently-asked questions (FAQs)”. They are intended as “usable” guidelines for those actually doing evaluations. Because they incorporate the results of the secondary evaluation, the Guidelines also present good and bad examples of information arrangement and analysis as well as for report writing.

For good examples of evaluation reports, Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring used to provide information as necessary when requested by departments in charge of project management. However, this information was not widely shared throughout the whole organization. In the future, JICA will use the framework for “evaluation of evaluations” designed through the secondary evaluation to systematically gather reports that can be used as good examples. These examples will be distributed through the Evaluation Network that shares knowledge throughout the whole organization (for details, refer to 2-3 “Reinforcing the Evaluation System and Capacity”, Chapter 2, Part 1). In so doing, JICA will seek the advice of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation in order to select high quality reports from a more objective perspective.

(3) “Impartiality of Evaluation Content”

In order to obtain more credible conclusions, a recommendation was made to have as many secondary evaluators as possible to take part in both external and internal evaluations. Moreover, these evaluators should be different from primary evaluators. JICA has decided to have reviews (a kind of secondary evaluation) for all country and thematic evaluations introduced from FY 2003. JICA will also proactively promote review for ex-post evaluations for individual projects (2-5 “Promoting Evaluations by Third Parties”, Chapter 2, Part 1).

All JICA evaluations, from ex-ante to terminal, amount to as much as 300 annually, and it is not practically feasible to ask external experts to do secondary evaluations on all the evaluations. Therefore, JICA will introduce a system of randomly selecting several dozen evaluations every year for an externally evaluated secondary evaluation and for checking evaluation quality. At the same time, JICA will promote external or internal independent specialists to participate in evaluation teams and as advisors in order to enhance the transparency and objectivity of the primary evaluations themselves.

(4) “Developing a Feedback Mechanism on Evaluation Results”

For feedback about evaluation results, every year the Evaluation Study Committee and its Working Group survey how much use is made of the lessons summarized in the latest issue of the Annual Evaluation Report. JICA then reports the result of the survey in the next issue of the Report. Making use of evaluation results, however, relies mainly on the individual effort of those concerned, which was also pointed out in this secondary evaluation; a mechanism for systematically applying evaluation results in projects is not enough. Evaluation results have also had quality problems, such as recommendations made without a reasonable basis or the failure to generalize the lessons learned from the evaluation. Consequently, JICA must acknowledge that evaluation results had not been fully reflected in projects.

Therefore, in order to enhance feedback, JICA has been working on the following: improving evaluation results accessibility (uploading evaluation results on websites or making a database of major lessons by field), improving evaluation quality (revising guidelines, implementing evaluation training, and introducing a synthesis study of evaluations), introducing feedback mechanisms (adding “utilization of lessons learned from past similar projects” to items

on the ex-ante evaluation, and assigning evaluation chiefs), and so on. In addition, based on the recommendations of the “secondary evaluation”, in order to further enhance feedback mechanism, JICA makes such efforts with its Evaluation Study Committee, survey incorporating feedback in JICA, and introduce a system for promoting feedbacks. Along with the advice and cooperation of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation, JICA will work to build a more effective mechanism to further encourage feedback in order to further use evaluation results to improve projects.

2-2 Comments on the Results of the Secondary Evaluation by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation

This section presents the comments on the secondary evaluation results by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan extends its appreciation to the members of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation who, despite various constraints, carried out the secondary evaluations on 40 terminal evaluations, explored better methods, and conducted precise evaluations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also acknowledges JICA for its sincere effort in deciding to do this secondary evaluation and sincerely accept and publish the results.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA have made clear their respective duties and strengthened their mutual linkage based on the recommendations of the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel, as well as the purpose of the Independent Administrative Institution System into which JICA was reorganized. One mutual effort is allocating responsibilities regarding evaluation targets. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes on the planning of ODA policy, it focuses on evaluating policies and programs. Meanwhile, JICA, the implementing organization, focuses on evaluation at the project level. Because it means the reinforcement of important basic documents not only for JICA but also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomes the accumulation of knowledge on the project level of new evaluation methods, such as this secondary evaluation, and the achievement of transparency and credible results.

The Annual Evaluation Report 2003 has accomplished the publication of evaluations about the evaluation process, but the evaluation is not concluded until its results are incorporated and reflected in project planning and execution. Recommendations based on this secondary evaluation include problems that JICA cannot solve alone. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expects JICA, as an independent administrative institution, to work on realizing these recommendations and accomplishing the objective of transforming into an independent administrative institutions, to “manage its undertakings appropriately and efficiently”, and further promote the division of responsibilities and collaboration with JICA.

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Economic Cooperation Bureau, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

Japan Bank for International Cooperation

The secondary evaluation implemented by JICA’s Advisory Committee on Evaluation is a leading-edge effort to enhance evaluation fairness and neutrality. It is also useful for contributing to developing human resources for evaluation by assembling points that ensure the credibility and universality of evaluation results. It is difficult for us to cope with the various evaluation necessities among us for ODA project evaluations conducted by JICA and JBIC due to the limited number of personnel, so the participation of external experts is essential. JBIC is of the view that external evaluation through this secondary evaluation improves credibility because JICA took the approach that external experts themselves may have unavoidable biases arising from their individual knowledge and viewpoint.

The secondary evaluation identified several evaluation categories whose variation in judgment among evaluators was larger than that among projects, such as “Usefulness” of “Lessons”, and “Credibility” and “Fairness” of “Recommendations”. Evaluations are in general regarded as learning tools for future projects. In reality, however, it is not easy to lead with practical and persuasive lessons and recommendations. This secondary evaluation proposes setting guidelines for reporting conclusions on concrete grounds. However, JBIC also thinks evaluator’s knowledge and expertise is the more important issue.

For evaluation categories, the proposal of narrowing down categories based on their correlations is one reason why evaluations require external experts. JICA’s approach of using multiple evaluators to improve evaluation quality while also improving efficiency by narrowing down items is regarded as an extremely effective option for organizations to take. For five scale rating, however, there is an opinion that results from odd-number-scaled ratings tend to bias to the center and that such a scale should be even in number. This point needs to be discussed further.

The clarification of project purpose and overall goal utilizing PDM, which was pointed out in the summary of the secondary evaluation results, is important to assure consistent evaluation from ex-ante to ex-post stage. At the same time, the PDM should be used in mid-term evaluation in order to flexibly improve both input and output and enable the steady accomplishment of project purposes.

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