

Southwest Asia

Pillars of Aid Priority Placed on Cooperation for Poverty Reduction and Economic Development

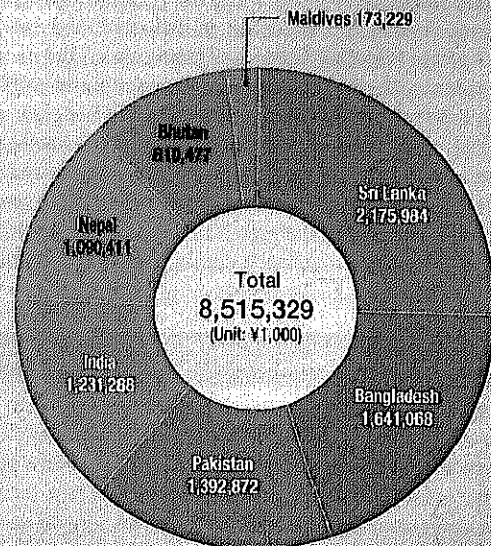
The region of Southwest Asia has a population of around 1.5 billion people, of which approximately 500 million belong to the poverty group, the second highest ratio in the world after sub-Saharan Africa. In Southwest Asia, development in health and education lags behind the rest of the world, and gender disparity continues to exist. The region is rich in ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, but it is also politically and socially unstable and contains areas of conflict.

The tense relationship between India and Pakistan has eased since 2003, and economic activities in each country in the region have been enlivened. Economies in the region have been comparatively strong, as exemplified by India, which has achieved remarkable economic growth in recent years. While such positive economic developments are expected to contribute to the stabilization of the region, the region continues to suffer from political instability.

As such, JICA focuses on poverty reduction and economic growth as two pillars of aid for Southwest Asia. In the area of poverty reduction, emphasis will be placed on human security and gender consideration as JICA provides support toward the improvement of living conditions such as health/population, education, the supply of safe water, community development, and human resources development. To support economic development, JICA has been offering cooperation to develop economic infrastructure and promote investment and trade in the private sector. JICA is further strengthening coordination with financial assistance projects. Support for economic development is also effective in promoting economic partnerships between Japan and the region. It is also essential for moving ahead with poverty reduction.

In addition to the above, JICA is also providing support for peace-building efforts in Nepal and Sri Lanka, which continue to be affected by conflicts, and support for disaster prevention and reconstruction in Pakistan and Bangladesh, which suffer from natural disasters. Here is cooperation particular to this region.

● Cooperation results by country in Southwest Asia (FY2007)



* This is the total amount of bilateral cooperation. The amount of cooperation provided to Asia including cooperation that covers a group of countries is 45,121,925 thousand yen.

Current State of Development

Countries of Southwest Asia are moving forward with development policies aimed at reducing poverty. While certain degrees of improvement have been made respectively, the social development index for the areas of education and health remains at a low level, and therefore this is a region which holds the key in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the region, various factors such as ethnicity, religion, language, and climate are complexly intertwined with politics and society. While this contributes to social and cultural diversity and depth, it is important to understand such context and offer assistance carefully and in accordance with each target area and situation.

For the past several years, the economic growth of Southwest Asia, with the exception of certain areas, has been relatively good, as it has progressed at a rate of over 5% annually. The recent economic development in India, which posted an average economic growth rate of 7.2% during the Tenth Five Year Plan period (March 2002 – July 2006), is outstanding, and an even greater acceleration than the 5.5% of the previous plan period (1997/98 – 2001/02). As a result of such economic development, the middle class has expanded and improvements have been seen in terms of the ratio of the poverty group. However, disparities between the capital and rural areas are actually on the rise.

Expansion of such disparities that accompany economic growth is an issue of concern in other countries as well. Moreover, as the key industry is agriculture for most countries, their economies are greatly influenced by natural conditions. Many of these countries are dependent on the export of specific goods such as clothing and agricultural products, and therefore, they have a

fragile economic structure.

To pursue solid economic growth, these countries must eradicate corruption, establish governance based on law, and ensure efficiency and transparency of administration. Improvement of governance is one of the issues common to all countries in the region.

Addressing Priority Issues in JICA Programs

Perspective of Human Security

In Southwest Asia, home to one-third of the world's poor, poverty control has been identified as a common priority issue, and projects are being formulated and implemented by proactively incorporating the perspective of human security.

For example, to people and areas that have no guarantee of basic living conditions, JICA provides support by offering services that reach them directly, including securing safe water, health, and sanitation. In Sri Lanka, a project that focuses on rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and empowerment of community groups is being implemented.

The poverty group is vulnerable to widespread infectious diseases and environmental contamination. Therefore, JICA is supporting tuberculosis control and the expanded program for immunization (EPI)/polio control in Pakistan, and infectious disease control targeting filaria and tuberculosis and measures against arsenic contamination of underground water in Bangladesh. Due to the arsenic pollution, the people of Bangladesh face the serious threat of the contamination of the drinking water that is essential for their lives. As such, through various forms of schemes including partnerships with NGOs, JICA provides comprehensive support that combines direct aid to the local people with support to enhance capabilities of the central and local governments.

Economic Development

In the area of economic development, infrastructure development and promotion of investment and trade are common issues among the countries in the region. Infrastructure supports economic growth of the country or region, and is a factor that induces investment in the private sector. In addition to economic infrastructure, improving governance will lead to the improvement of an investment environment, investment promotion, and improvement of productivity, and thus, economic growth.

The core of the development of economic infrastructure is the transportation and traffic sector. However, an underdeveloped road network constitutes the largest common concern in Southwest Asia. Thus, JICA promotes technical cooperation to develop roads, including bridges, in combination with yen loans and grant aid assistance.

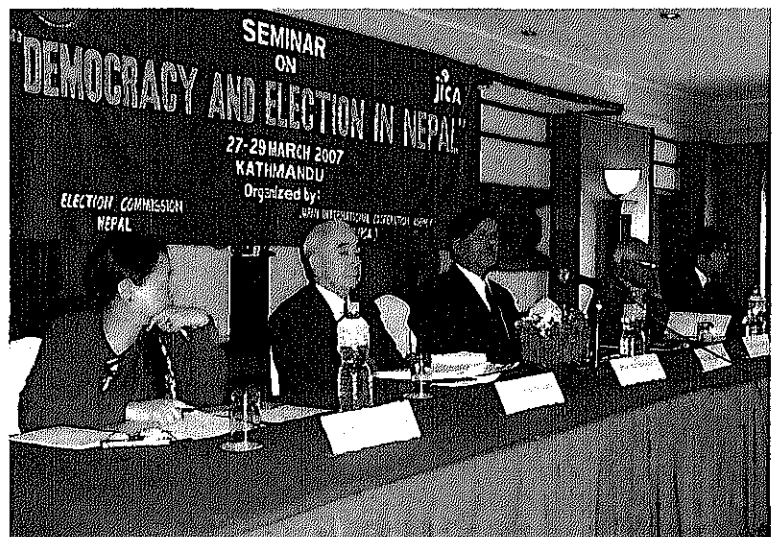
In India, which maintains rapid economic growth, infrastructure development cannot keep up with the speed of economic development. Japan is supporting infrastructure development in the country mainly with yen loans. Support for development and enhancement of arterial freight railroads aims to contribute to the promotion of economic and social activities and development of an investment environment by improving the efficiency of the domestic distribution system. In more concrete terms, a development study has been implemented for a dedicated freight corridor

project on two routes, one between Delhi and Mumbai and the other between Delhi and Howrah (near Kolkata), which form the two northern sides of the "Golden Quadrilateral" connecting the four major cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai), which are the growing bases of the country. The Indian government is reviewing the implementation of the project based on the development study.

Peace building and Support for Democratization

In Nepal, a rebel conflict has continued for the past 10 years, which has not only caused internal displacement and destroyed facilities, but also loss of a great number of lives. In November 2006, however, a historic peace agreement was concluded between the antigovernment force and the government. In January 2007, the interim parliament was set up, and in April, an interim government was inaugurated. Although some difficulties have been faced, such as the postponement of the constituent assembly election date for determining the new shape of the country to April 2008, preparations for the election are underway. For people to build a new nation with hope and confidence, realization of a fair and free election is vital. JICA thus provided assistance required for the implementation of the constituent assembly election, such as strengthening the capacities of the Election Commission and support for voter education. With the aim of reducing disparities between urban and rural areas, which is considered to have been a structural factor in the conflict, JICA will provide assistance after the election specifically focusing on improving the livelihoods of the people in the area most affected by the conflict.

As far as conflicts in Sri Lanka are concerned, an indefinite cease-fire agreement was reached between Sri Lanka's government and the ethnic Tamil rebels called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in February 2002. However, the peace talks between the government and the LTTE remained static, and in January 2008, the cease-fire agreement was abandoned.



"Democracy and Election in Nepal" Seminar



Nepalese trainees in Japan, learning the process of vote counting

Currently, conflict is intensifying in the northern region. Since the suspension of the conflict, JICA has continued to support war-affected people and refugees. By providing direct support for residents and training for administrators who deal with residents' groups, JICA helps to empower communities and municipalities so that they can address various problems and issues that they face through their own wisdom and power. Whether or not these cooperation efforts can be continued depends on the political and security situation in the country, and therefore future developments are a matter of concern.

In Pakistan and Bhutan, JICA is providing assistance in capacity building of local governments from the viewpoint of democratization. Since the trend for democratization is accelerating in Southwest Asia as well, delegation of authority from the central to local governments is in progress. At the same time, however, lack of human resources and experience at the local government level is causing confusion and stagnancy in their functional capabilities, and therefore there is a need for organizational and individual capacity building.

Post-disaster Reconstruction and Disaster Prevention

As Southwest Asia is a region that is susceptible to many types of natural disasters, emergency assistance at the time of disasters and post-disaster reconstruction assistance, as well as prevention measures, are of particular importance.

Sri Lanka and the Maldives continue to work on reconstruction after suffering damage from the tsunami disaster that occurred at the end of 2004, and Pakistan is rebuilding its northern region which was hit by a major earthquake in October 2005. The foremost issue faced by Bangladesh is reducing damage caused by recurrent cyclones and massive floods.

In Bangladesh, a cyclone hit in November 2007, affecting close to 9 million people and causing catastrophic damage, particularly to people's homes and to vital rural infrastructure. JICA first gave emergency assistance by supplying necessary goods, then promptly conducted a needs assessment survey to provide reconstruction assistance. In conducting this survey, it was found that knowledge gained through past cooperation was being put to use. It was reported that the alarm system supported by radar microwaves for meteorological observation which was installed through grant aid assistance set off appropriately, and that around 70,000 residents evacuated to the 81 shelters that were built, again, through grant aid assistance.

JICA has received words of appreciation from the people of Pakistan for its uninterrupted support that began with emergency assistance and continued on to reconstruction efforts.

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Front Line

Bangladesh

Disaster Prevention Efforts

Never to repeat the tragedy...

Cyclone Sidr, which hit Bangladesh in November 2007, caused around 5,000 deaths and major damage to houses, livestock, and crops. After the cyclone disaster of 1991 that left 140,000 people dead, aid agencies and NGOs from Japan and other countries built cyclone shelters along the coast of the Bay of Bengal, most of which are used as elementary schools during times of calm. Although many residents used the shelters when Cyclone Sidr hit, many others still lost their lives, as some refused to leave their homes for fear of losing their houses or livestock, and others decided not to evacuate on the grounds that it was a false alarm, as nothing had happened when the alarm had gone off on previous occasions.

Following the Sidr disaster in Cox's Bazaar, a city on the coast of Bangladesh, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) have been distributing disaster prevention calendars that they created to elementary school teachers and local disaster prevention volunteers and offering disaster prevention education using illustrations and picture-card shows mainly at elementary schools. At the same time, in cooperation with existing regional organizations (governments, NGOs, and volunteer groups organized by them), disaster prevention education is being offered

to residents of rural villages who often fail to receive information when disasters strike. To search for the best ways to protect people's lives and livelihoods from the damage of cyclones that pose a threat to the development of a sustainable society, education and partnership with the local residents are essential.

(JICA Bangladesh Office)



Constructed cyclone shelter

Middle East

Middle East

Pillars of Aid Assistance for Regional Peace and Stability and Response to Common Needs

The Middle East is not only a region where ancient civilization such as Mesopotamia and Egypt flourished but it has also played a geopolitically important role in connecting eastern and western civilizations, which is why it is called the Crossroads of Civilizations. The Middle East, which holds approximately 60% of the world's crude oil deposits, is also an indispensable region for the future development and stability of the world economy. On the other hand, as represented by the Palestinian issue, this region continually has conflicts owing to various factors, including ethnicity, religion, and politics, which has had great impact on world politics and economies.

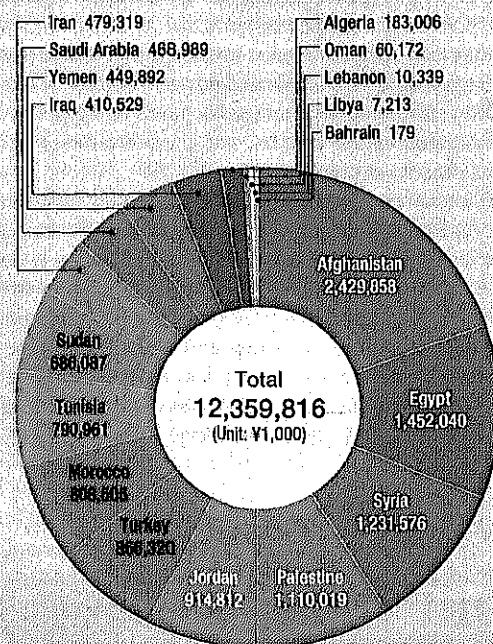
The stability of this region is very important for the energy security of Japan, which receives approximately 90% of its oil from the Middle East. Unlike European societies, Japan occupies a neutral position with regard to the Middle East, both historically and politically. Therefore, Japan can play an important role as a member of the international community in building good relationships with countries in the Middle East and contributing to the stability and development of the region.

For the purpose of program implementation, JICA defines the Middle East as the region stretching from Morocco in the west, through the countries of North Africa, and on to Afghanistan to the east and Turkey in the north. This region includes various countries that have different relationships with the neighboring world as well as different political and economic situations. Therefore, there is a wide range of aid needs depending on the situation in each country.

Among these, JICA places the utmost priority on peace building and reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine as the key to stability of the Middle East.

In addition, in the fields of water resource management, industrial promotion, human resources development, and environmental protection, all of which are vital needs common to the region, JICA implements cooperation in line with these needs, including the Volunteer Program.

● Cooperation results by country in the Middle East (FY2007)



* This is the total amount of bilateral cooperation. The amount of cooperation provided to the Middle East including cooperation that covers a group of countries is 12,418,131 thousand yen.

Current State of Development

The Middle East encompasses high-income countries, most of which produce oil, as well as less developed countries, most of which do not produce oil. Each country has diverse ethnicities and cultures comprising a complex social structure. Therefore, detailed cooperation in line with the actual conditions of each country is necessary. It is an unstable region that has seen much conflict since World War II, including four Middle East wars, the Lebanese conflict, the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf Crisis, the Yemen conflict, and the Iraq war. Unstable political conditions continue in Palestine and Iraq. After the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan is still characterized by severe security

conditions. However, multi-layered and multi-faceted reconstruction assistance continues to be provided by the international community, including Japan.

Recurrent terrorism and conflicts in the Middle East have a tremendous impact on the stability of the world economy. Therefore, support for reconciliations among different ethnic groups, religions, and social classes leading to regional stability are called for.

In the oil producing countries where finance is relatively abundant, infrastructure such as transportation and information networks is developed at a high standard; however, human

resources development in the public sector is a big issue. On the other hand, in relatively low-income countries which are not blessed with resources, the priority tasks are to address issues related to health, education and the delay in rural development. There are also some cases where development assistance is greatly affected by a country's political situation and security conditions, such as in the case of Palestine and Afghanistan. It is necessary to implement development assistance under appropriate policies based on accurate understanding of situations that greatly differ from country to country.

As for reconstruction assistance for Iraq, JICA continues to support the development of human resources in the public sector based on Japanese government policy by collaborating with yen loans and grant aid. With regard to assistance in Palestine, based on the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity concept proposed by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi during his visit to

Palestine in 2006, JICA is promoting regional development of the West Bank, mainly in Jericho. In Afghanistan, JICA is carrying out projects that show quick results in line with the request of the Afghan people, as well as medium- to long-term capacity development projects for the purpose of enhancing human resources and organizations that will take charge of future growth and development.

As the international situation has drastically changed since the terrorist attacks in the US in September 2001, the international community has been paying greater attention to what roles development assistance can play in promoting stability and peacebuilding in the Middle East. As described above, assistance in the Middle East is closely related to the international situation. Based on the trend of the international situation, JICA implements projects while closely coordinating with Japan's governmental policies and principles.

Addressing Priority Issues in JICA Programs

Efforts by Area

Palestine: Toward Peace in the Middle East

A Middle East peace conference was held in Annapolis, Maryland, in the United States in November 2007, at which peace talks between Israel and Palestine were reopened. In December 2007, an international conference of donors was held in Paris. Despite confusion and other issues that exist in Gaza, assistance to Palestine is being more actively provided.

Through technical cooperation projects in areas of local administration, maternal and child health, and waste control which started in fiscal 2005, JICA has enhanced various administrative services offered by the Palestinian Authority to support the improvement of livelihoods, especially in Jericho.

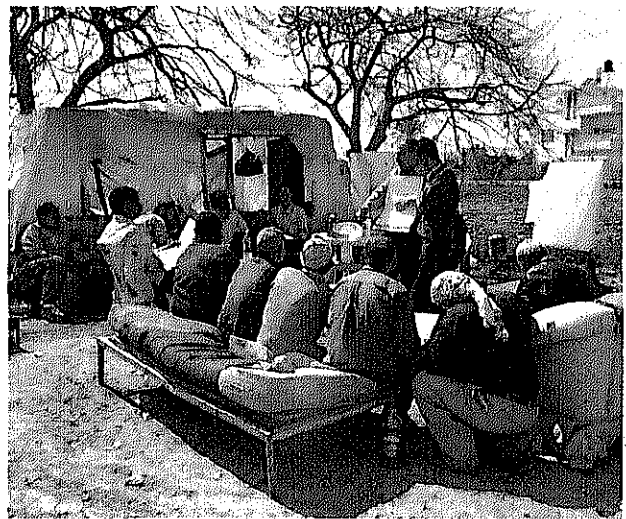


The Corridor for Peace and Prosperity concept is based on the belief that the development of trust is important in promoting peace, and to this end, sustainable economic development based on inter-regional cooperation is essential.

Based on this idea, JICA has been offering technical cooperation for improving agricultural skills, and conducting studies for building an agro-industrial park in the future, and for comprehensive water management in Jordan Valley. These projects aim to develop agriculture and its related industries as the primary industry in the regional economy of the Jordan Valley, including

Jericho. They have been implemented from the perspective of a program approach in which they are organically coordinated with assistance in various sectors – such as governance, agriculture, and tourism – to boost project results.

As for the Gaza Strip, where political and security conditions are unstable, the dispatch of Japanese experts to this region is difficult. Therefore, follow-up cooperation such as support for activities of the former training participants' alumni association is the core of the assistance.



Guidance being given at a demo-farm for the sustainable agricultural technology establishment project (Palestine)

Afghanistan: Expanding Projects amid Numerous Development Issues and an Unstable Security Situation

Approximately six years have passed since Japan began reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan in earnest in July 2002. Initially, JICA began emergency assistance projects such as road development, school construction, emergency reconstruction of medical facilities, and vocational training of returned ex-combatants in Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-sharif and Bamiyan. Subsequent assistance was provided to a wide range of sectors, such as those related to tuberculosis control and maternal and child health, teacher education, literacy education, vocational training, reconstruction of agricultural experiment stations, rural infrastructure development, and community empowerment.

Reconstruction efforts through assistance from donor countries including Japan are showing successful results in the area of



Visiting a construction site for an irrigation facility being built under a rural development assistance project. (Northern Bamiyan, Afghanistan)

social and economic development, including healthcare, education, rural development and road construction. At the same time, however, problems such as deterioration of public security, an increase in poppy farming and spread of corruption that endanger the peace and stability of Afghanistan remain to be tackled through efforts incorporating the international community.

Due to the deterioration of security in Afghanistan, the Japanese government designated the entire country a "region under evacuation advisory" in mid-2007. However, due to the importance of providing reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan, JICA has continued to carry out necessary activities by first enhancing its information gathering efforts and security measures.

As Afghanistan still has overwhelming development needs, JICA is going to provide assistance, for some time to come, that is concentrated in areas of agriculture, rural development, healthcare, education, and urban development and infrastructure, based on the economic cooperation policy dialogue that the governments of Japan and Afghanistan have been holding regularly since 2006.

In specific terms, in 2007 JICA began Phase 2 of a project in the education sector that continues to demonstrate a wide range of development needs, provided cooperation for improving rice farming based mainly in Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, and formulated a master plan for the Kabul Metropolitan Area Development aimed at resolving the rapidly increasing number of urban issues in the capital city of Kabul (see Feature). The important matter to tackle in the future will be determining how best to support the implementation of the various projects that are being proposed under this master plan.

In Afghanistan, which is in need of speedy reconstruction assistance, there are calls for projects that can bring the swift results strongly desired by the Afghan people. At the same time, however, enhancement of human resources and organizations that will take charge of the country's future growth and development is essential. Therefore, JICA will continue to implement medium- to long-term capacity building projects in the future.

Iraq: Peace building

Five years have passed since the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003, and the political process for democratization is progressing as evidenced by the implementation of a national election in December 2005 and the inauguration of an official government in May 2006. Further, the Iraq Compact, which is the framework for a new partnership between Iraq and the international community, was established in May 2007.

At the International Donors' Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq held in October 2003, the Japanese government announced grant aid cooperation worth US\$1.5 billion and yen loans worth US\$3.5 billion as support for Iraq. JICA is promoting institutional capacity enhancement of Iraq-related organizations and development of human resources with an emphasis on synergy effects through combining grant aid cooperation and yen loans in the priority areas of democratization, water, health, electricity, and agriculture.

For example, since 2006 JICA has been continuously providing training in Japan to personnel related to port authorities in southern Iraq who are targeted under the Sector Reconstruction Project implemented through a yen loan.

Additionally, as security in Iraq is very poor, national reconciliation is a major issue. In March 2008, JICA held the Seminar

Front Line

Syria

Cooperation between UNRWA and JOCV comes to fruition

The Dream Stage: Cinderella Music Concert

In the Palestinian refugee camps, where people designated by the United Nations (UN) as refugees have been living for around 60 years, approximately 66,000 students attend the primary and junior high schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Due to the scarcity of schools, teachers and classrooms, the schools are run in two shifts of morning and afternoon using the same buildings, each class consisting of over 40 students. Since 2000, JICA has been providing cooperation in the education sector by dispatching Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) to schools in the main six Syrian cities to mostly teach physical education and music-related classes, with the hope of bringing a sense of hope to the future of the children who suffer as refugees.

The Cinderella Contest started in spring 2006 as a national music event to encourage the refugee girls, who had never gone outside of their camps, to learn to dream by having them pretend to be Cinderella. For the third event held in April 2008, the system of ranking and giving out awards, as well as the limit on the number of participants, were discontinued so that more students could have fun taking part. More family

members and local residents were able to enjoy this year's concert, which was held at the outdoor music hall of a refugee camp. Members of UNRWA and JOCV will continue to work together through trial and error so that the children's dream stage will develop to become even more meaningful for the refugee community.

(JICA Syria Office)



Concert held at an outdoor music hall at a refugee camp

on the National Reconciliation of Iraq to which 11 members of the Iraqi delegation including members of parliament and heads and members of religious and ethnic parties were invited. At the seminar, the Iraqi participants attended lectures related to peace building, discussed priority issues in Iraq such as federalism, local government, amendment of the constitution, and a proposed Oil and Gas Law, and also visited Hiroshima.

Water Resources Management and Environmental Protection

The Middle East, where most of the land is arid, has the scarcest water resources per capita in the world. In addition, population growth and industrialization are exacerbating the lack of water resources. Recent economic development, industrialization, and rapid urbanization have worsened environmental problems such as water pollution, solid waste, and air pollution.

JICA provides cooperation to improve technical levels in respective countries, in areas including water resources management and urban and rural water supply in the water resources sector as well as sewage management, waste control, and environmental management in the environment sector.



Trainees from Africa learning rice milling techniques in Egypt

South-South Cooperation

Countries in the Middle East are not only deeply connected politically and culturally but they also share many development issues within the region. Region-wide cooperation in which countries in the region capitalize on their strengths is effective for solving these issues, leading to stability for the whole region. Collaboration with Arab countries is critical for the Middle East peace process and support for Iraq as well. To promote South-South cooperation, which is an embodiment of these goals, JICA conducts many training courses for Iraq and Palestine in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Tunisia.

As for South-South cooperation for Africa, cooperation centered on third-country training is implemented in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco in line with the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process. Outcomes of Japan's past cooperation and characteristics of the host country are utilized in line with the needs of countries in conducting third-country training.



Syrian counterparts visiting a project site related to reproductive health in Jordan

Front Line

Iraq

Water Management in Irrigated Farmland

Taking their own initiative in recovering the rich water resources

Iraq, drawing on the rich water resources of its two large rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, has had flourishing agriculture since ancient times. However, the water flow of both rivers has dropped since the 1970s due to increased water intake by the countries upriver. The decline in the amount of usable water due to inappropriate water resources management and salification of soil brought on by deteriorating irrigation drainage systems has become a problem. Moreover, as 7 million laborers work in the agriculture sector, restoring agriculture through improved productivity is a major issue facing postwar Iraq, which is suffering from a high unemployment rate.

Since 2006, JICA has been implementing the Irrigated Farmland Water Management Project that aims to introduce and disseminate techniques that lead to improvement of water usage efficiency and agricultural productivity at irrigated farmlands within Iraq. Training courses that respond to the technological issues are set up mainly in Jordan and also in Egypt and Syria, and the curriculum is also incorporated into the training courses offered in Japan. Many trainees from Karbala, which is the implementation site of the pilot project, repeatedly attend the training

programs offered in each of these countries. The goal is, through the advancement of the capacity-building efforts, for the Iraqis to become capable of independently implementing and managing the pilot project. Through the dedicated guidance of the Japanese experts who at times teach until late at night and the trainees' passionate will for reconstructing their home country and eagerness to learn the technology and gain knowledge, the capabilities of the Iraqi trainees are steadily improving.

(JICA Jordan Office, Iraq Unit)



Japanese expert giving instructions to Iraqi trainees (engineers)