Japan International Cooperation Agency

Thematic Evaluation: Distance Technical Cooperation

～From the Contents under the Control of JICA-Net Division～

Executive Summary

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Contents

Executive Summary

1. Background of the evaluation

Since JICA distance technical cooperation started in 2002, 1,949 distance lectures and seminars have been held and 129 multimedia content pieces have been created through the scheme. As more than 5 years have passed since its initiation, it has become necessary to review changes surrounding the distance technical cooperation, verify the objectives/vision set out in the master plan, and examine ideal future plans.

2. The purpose of the evaluation and Study questions

This evaluation aims to review the 5 year achievement of distance technical cooperation and clarify its contribution to JICA's broader technical cooperation. By analyzing former activities, issues to be considered will be defined and recommendations will be provided.

There are 4 main questions to be answered in the evaluation:

1) What effects has JICA-Net had for JICA technical cooperation?
2) What unintended impacts has JICA-Net made to JICA technical cooperation?
3) What are hindering and contributing factors to effective and efficient JICA-Net implementation?
4) What are lessons learned and recommendations for strategic future planning of JICA-Net?

3. Target of the evaluation

This study is targeting 307 cases of distance lecture/seminars and multimedia contents out of all of those implemented between 2002 and 2006. Those 307 instances were directly managed by the JICA-Net division and various reports concerning them are available.

The sample group does not include seminars which were not managed by JICA-Net division and distance discussions which were simply meetings with the TV conference system.

4. Methodology and procedure

In this study, analysis was conducted both on an overall review and case study analysis basis.

1) Overall review

Available information on planning papers, progress reports, and evaluation reports of the 307 target contents was analyzed from various perspectives, and tendencies were identified. Change over time was also included as a consideration.

2) Case study analysis

The 307 target contents were categorized according to types of seminar applicant, such as individual expert, project expert, regional JICA office, C/Ps, and JICA headquarters staff. The contribution to JICA technical cooperation was examined by collecting opinions via interviews and questionnaires. During the field study, seminar participants and their superiors were also interviewed to investigate the background and find supporting evidence for the seminar applicants' comments. In addition, unexpected impacts were also identified.

There were three phases to the analysis: firstly domestic study, then field study, and finally a second period of domestic study.

3) Findings and recommendations

After collecting all the results of interviews and questionnaires, the outputs were evaluated and unexpected impacts were summarized. In addition, contributing and inhibiting factors were also identified, and recommendations were developed for strategic implementation of distance technical cooperation.

5. Distance technical cooperation

1) Definition of distance education and its trends

The basic idea of distance education is:

A style of education in which either:

- The trainer and trainee do not share the same space

or

- The trainer and trainee do not share the same time

and which requires:

- A special plan, preparation, method media or structure to supplement the environment above.

The current trend of distance education is towards the Blended Approach, which blends several education methods, such as Open Network, in which various institutions can have free access to the delivered network, and open source, in which all resources are opened to users. The treatment of copyright has also developed to manage this free access structure.

Since stakeholders are required to innovate, manage and operate technology to utilize distance education, their skills and knowledge of distance education and its systems directly affect the implementation of activities.

2) International cooperation with distance education methods

Distance education is currently being implemented in the field of international cooperation. GDLN[1], the World Bank and other institutions such as Asian Development Bank Institutions, Asia Productivity Organization, and The Association for Overseas Technical Scholarships, have implemented distance education, TV conferences and Internet Learning, and some of them are increasing their use of these.

3) JICA-Net and GDLN, World Bank

The business model of JICA-Net, the JICA distance technical cooperation TV conference tool, is different to that of GDLN, the World Bank's distance learning network. JICA-Net is a network only for JICA stakeholders and is not used for business engagements. By contrast, the World Bank's GDLN is a network open to the public (with a usage charge). GDLN has distance learning centers, so called DLC, in several countries in the world, and these are operated individually like franchise sites.

After concluding a mutual agreement for cooperation these two different schemes have shared contents. In light of the trend towards aid donor coordination, more vigorous cooperation between the two organizations is expected.

4) Definition of distance technical cooperation at JICA

According to the 'Basic Plan of distance technical cooperation' (2002), the definition of distance technical cooperation is technical cooperation that:

[1] Global Distance Learning Network; The network system for distance learning by the World Bank

- is not restricted by space and time; and
- utilizes the methods of distance education.

5) Findings from overall review

Reports related to the target 307 contents were analyzed with consideration of the factors below:

- the relationship with other JICA activities
- the advantage of distance technical cooperation
- the position of seminar applicants

(1) The relationship with other JICA activities

Target contents were divided into the three groups below:

1-1) Contents to supplement specific activities of technical cooperation	1-1-1) Types of supplement	a) To supplement technical cooperation projects b) To supplement individual experts' activities c) To supplement third country training, training in Japan, and development studies
	1-1-2) Timing of supplement	a) Before implementing the technical cooperation b) During implementation of the technical cooperation c) After implementing the technical cooperation
1-2) Contents for the public (Recommended Seminars)		
1-3) Contents for the public (except for Recommended Seminars)		

1-1) comprised about 50%, 1-2) about 30%, and 1-3) about 20%.

Distance lectures and seminars (about 50% of the sample), were analyzed using two considerations: 1-1-1) Types of supplement and 1-1-2) Timing of supplement.

1-1-1) Types of supplement

There are 5 types of programs of technical cooperation: technical cooperation projects, individual experts' activities, third country training, training in Japan, and development studies. The ratio of contents by each group is:

- 50%: technical cooperation projects
- 40%: individual experts' activities
- 10%: third country trainings, trainings in Japan, and development studies (the remainder).

Change over the years shows that if the ratio of the contents for individual experts' activities decreased, the ratio of the contents for other programs, such as third country training, training in Japan and development studies, increased. This might be because technical cooperation was more diffused.

1-1-2) Timing of supplement

80% of contents were delivered during implementation of the technical cooperation. There are a few contents, less than 10%, which were delivered before and after implementation. Contents before implementation of technical cooperation are aimed at capacity development and knowledge expansion for counterpart candidates. The purpose of the contents after implementation of the technical cooperation is to support counterpart organizations' activities and to provide follow-up capacity development for counterparts.

1-2) Contents for the public (Recommended Seminars)

JICA-Net division provided open seminars which are not for specific programs. The seminars, so called 'Recommended Seminars', show tendencies regarding their scheduling and the number of participants. In the 3 years from FY2004 to FY2006, about 70 courses were implemented. The average

length was 2.5 hours, and for this time period the average site connection was 6.5 and in total there were more than 3000 participants. Participants are recruited by JICA regional offices according to the topics covered. Although the purpose of Recommended Seminars is to provide a chance to experience distance lectures and seminars, some offices recruited participants in line with strategies for capacity development of specific JICA counterpart organizations.

1-3) Contents for the public (except for Recommended Seminars)

This group provided specific Japanese knowledge and skills for participants in several countries and organizations and specific know-how to improve business capacities for JICA's former counterparts.

(2) The advantage of distance technical cooperation

Distance technical cooperation has some peculiarities not shared by JICA's technical cooperation. The next analysis was, therefore, carried out with consideration of four of the advantages of distance technical cooperation (below).

2-1) Various lecturers
2-2) A large number of participants
2-3) Multiple connection sites
2-4) Interconnection with other organizations

2-1) Various lecturers

The average number of lecturers who were assigned at one session was 1.9. Half of the sessions assigned one lecturer; two were assigned for 20%; and three for 10%. The maximum number of lecturers assigned was 16.

2-2) A large number of participants

The average number of participants was 41.1 and the total number from the target lectures and seminars was 10,026. Half of the lectures and seminars had 1–30 participants, 40% of them had 31–70 participants and 10% of them had 71–99 or more than 100.

2-3) Multiple connection sites

The average number of connection sites per session was 3.7. More than half of target seminars and lectures had connections to 2 sites (Japan and one other), and seminars with connections to 3 sites and 4 sites each accounted for 10%. There were few seminars and lecturers which had connections to more than 5 sites, although one seminar had maximum connection sites, 16. When recommended seminars (which always had a large number of connection sites) were omitted from the group, more than 80% of cases had 2 site connections. This shows the uniqueness of JICA's bilateral cooperation style.

2-4) Interconnection with other organizations

Some lectures and seminars had connections with other organizations such as GDLN or IETC[2]. 20% of the sessions were connected with GDLN and IETC, and 10% of them were connected with other organizations having TV conferencing systems. At Recommended Seminars, the only target site except for JICA-Net was GDLN and 80% of interconnections with GDLN were implemented during Recommended Seminars.

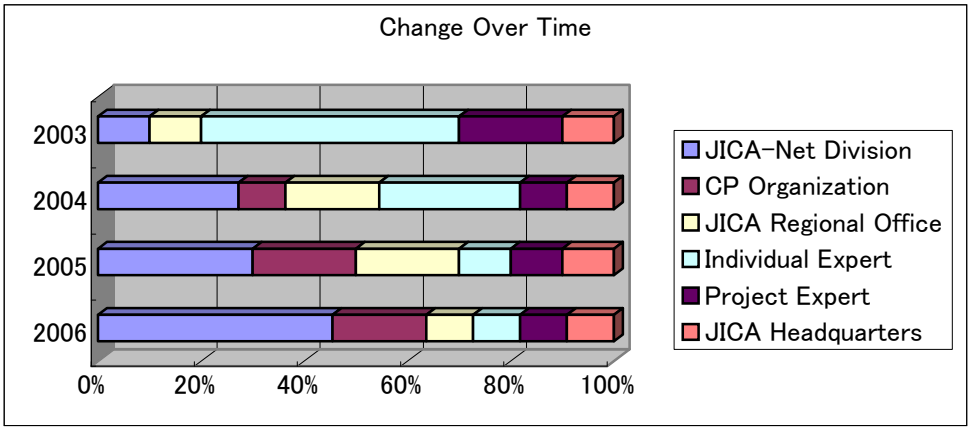
(3) The position of seminar applicants

The positions of seminar applicants were picked out from relevant reports and categorized into 7 groups. 30% of applicants were from JICA-Net Division, 20% of them were from counterpart institutions, JICA regional offices and individual experts, and 10% of them were project experts and

[2] Indonesia Export Training Center: the center had JICA technical cooperation (2002–2006)

from JICA headquarters. The larger number of applications from JICA-Net Division is because of the large number of recommended seminars which were provided by them.

With time, the number of applications from JICA-Net division has increased, and the proportion in FY2006 was around half. Although there were no applications from counterpart organizations in FY2003, their number increased from FY2004. This fact is considered to be a result of promotion and support systems that enable counterparts to apply distance lectures and seminars without the support of JICA experts and JICA officers, but with the support by JICA-Net producers. The applications from JICA regional offices do not show any changes by year. Applications from individual experts, which accounted for around 50% of all applications in FY2003, have decreased year by year. Applications from project experts were seen more than other applications in FY2003, but decreased from FY2004 and have not changed since then. Applications from JICA headquarters have not exhibited any changes over time.



6) The operation process of distance technical cooperation

(1) Establishment of Sites

The diffusion of sites of TV conference systems has exceeded the planned numbers in the first 3 years. All JICA domestic centers, and most JICA regional offices, except for a few countries having political problems, were introduced into the system by FY2006. Since FY2007, new constructions for JICA offices not introduced into the system have been progressing continuously.

(2) The improvement of connections

During the first 3 years from FY2002, ISDN, IP and satellite lines were used for connection, depending on the situation. The JICA-WAN has been used as the main line since FY2005. Specific countries that have not been incorporated into the JICA-WAN have still been using other lines such as ISDN, IP and satellite. JICA-WAN is used for bilateral connections and MCU equipment enabling multiple connections is available at Tokyo Core Centre TIC.

(3) The implementation system

The JICA-Net division (part of the JICA Public Policy Department) takes charge of the management and operation of the overall planning and implementation. Under the management of JICA-Net division, JICA-Net Producers provide assistance to realize the ideas of the requested distance technical cooperation. By listening to the requests, total distance technical cooperation is produced from planning to preparation, execution and evaluation, and through to the production of teaching materials. In addition, JICA-Net Operators are in charge of operating the equipment at JICA-Net facilities.

(4) The promotion of utilization of distance technical cooperation

Since the program started, promotional activities have been carried out to accumulate contents and know-how of distance technical cooperation. There are two main types of promotional activities: 'JICA-Net request survey' and 'Recommended Seminars'. JICA-Net request surveys allow JICA-Net producers to promote distance technical cooperation and formulate new contents by gauging the needs of JICA stakeholders in foreign countries. By contrast, Recommended Seminars consist of JICA-Net division providing ready-made seminars to the public to experience the use of distance technical cooperation.

These activities succeeded in increasing the number of new contents and users of distance technical cooperation. This is due to the support system provided by JICA-Net division and JICA-Net producers. At this time, it cannot be said that JICA stakeholders can apply distance technical cooperation into their activities spontaneously and on their own initiative.

6. Findings from the case study analysis

The findings below were from the case study analysis.

1) Contribution of distance technical cooperation to the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of technical cooperation

(1) The effective utilization of ready-made contents by JICA stakeholders

Some JICA stakeholders already use ready-made contents shown on the WEB site or JICA-Net library for their own activities. However, it is doubtful that awareness of the JICA-Net library and utilization of ready made contents is common among all stakeholders. More promotion is required to gain increased visibility.

(2) The assignment of necessary resources

The system, which does not require the actual movement of people, increased the opportunity to assign the most suitable lectures. As such, it seems that effective resources contribute to the acceleration of technical cooperation activities. On the other hand, it is possible that by the language level of the lecturer or system trouble could have a negative effect on the lecture. Specific know-how regarding the use of distance education is therefore required for effective implementation.

(3) The provision of knowledge and skills to the target participants

Some face to face training, such as third country training, or training in Japan, can restrict the number of participants. Compared to training of this sort, distance technical cooperation is flexible and has the potential to allow more participants. It is a great advantage that a large number of people can see a lecture at once and thereafter contribute to support ongoing activities efficiently.

2) The collection of technical cooperation contents and their promotion

The collection and sharing of technical cooperation contents was also examined. The JICA-Net library on the JICA-Net WEB site is dedicated to enhance the collection and sharing of contents, and JICA stakeholders have access to these. In this sense, one of the purposes, knowledge management, can be achieved. However, no re-use of those contents was observed and more utilization is expected to improve technical cooperation.

3) Responding to the various needs of technical cooperation

(1) Flexibility of the timing of implementation

Distance technical cooperation can be used at a specific time without international agreement. 20% of lectures and seminars were implemented before starting technical cooperation and showed a great

contribution to an effective start of projects. Distance technical cooperation can of course also be used after a project, as a follow up. Moreover, the flexibility of scheduling enables the users to obtain necessary information at necessary times. It proves that distance technical cooperation could respond to the various needs of technical cooperation.

(2) The flexibility to choose target countries and areas

Distance technical cooperation was able to provide needed knowledge and skills under emergency situations, and to supplement activities in the field.

On the other hand, the limitations were also recognized. For example, in the case of an emergency, participants cannot move to sites and lecturers cannot provide the suitable contents without having proper information in the field.

(3) The ease of access to resources

Some lectures and seminars could invite multiple lecturers and could recognize the positive outputs from them. Distance technical cooperation made possible the access to necessary resources and contributed to improving ongoing activities. At the same time, assigning multiple lecturers requires more coordination. In addition, a higher level of interpretation is required to respond to multiple topics. These conditions should be borne in mind when considering effective implementation.

(4) Outreach expansion

Recommended Seminars were opened to the public and attracted a large number of participants. Some lectures and seminars had more than 100 participants. There is therefore no doubt that distance technical cooperation could expand the reach of JICA's cooperation. However, a negative influence on learning effectiveness was also recognized, because there was less interaction due to the number of participants. In addition, it was hard to identify specific outputs to enhance ongoing activities made by the participants of Recommended Seminars. Therefore, more strategic implementation should be developed according to what is needed.

(5) Partnership with other sites

Multiple connections provided the opportunity of collaborative learning with other countries. Although collaboration was seen between countries, it was just at the time of the seminars and lectures and did not continue after that. This is because of the fact that no preparation was made allow connections between sites after the sessions. Some more strategic preparation, such as announcing contact information, should be planned to allow effective support for technical cooperation.

(6) Partnerships with other organizations

JICA's distance technical cooperation has jointly delivered seminars and lectures with other organizations, such as the World Bank's GDLN. However, the collaboration between JICA and other organizations was only seen during the sessions, and did not progress after that. As such, current achievements have not fully utilized the opportunities of the co-development of contents with other organizations.

4) Impact

As a result of outreach expansion, a large number of people can utilize the outputs of seminars and lectures in their capacity development and accordingly effects on their organization can be seen. Participants could gain know-how which is not directly related to their expertise. Additionally, the lectures and seminars could be an opportunity for promotion and diffusion of Japanese ideas and JICA's activities. Furthermore, preparing lectures and seminars is a good opportunity for the assigned coordinator to develop the skills of handling tasks effectively, and these habits could apply to daily

jobs. Finally, new styles of training with specific systems increased the motivation of participants and made them review ongoing training styles.

7. Recommendation

1) The basic system of distance technical cooperation at JICA headquarters

To establish the system to embed distance technical cooperation into technical cooperation

With its financial and co-ordinational strengths, as well as its flexibility and speed of implementation, distance technical cooperation is recognized as a convenient tool to supplement technical cooperation. On the other hand, this very flexibility sometimes resulted in implementation which did not contribute that effectively to technical cooperation. It is indispensable to clarify the role of distance technical cooperation in order to ensure proper outputs to improve ongoing technical cooperation. Hence, the establishment of a system to embed the usage of distance technical cooperation in technical cooperation from the beginning is recommended.

To have a proper balance between designed and unplanned distance technical cooperation

As mentioned above, embedding the use of distance technical cooperation is important. However, this should not be at the expensive of distance technical cooperation which can be flexibly used in the case of emergency and so on, which should still be applied on proper occasions. Hence, it is recommended that the balance between designed and unplanned sessions is considered.

To implement open lectures and seminars according to JICA's priorities

Open lectures and seminars showed contributions to the development of individual and organizational capacities. In this sense, the continuous implementation of open lectures and seminars is recommended. They could be a regular session for capacity development for JICA stakeholders, and the outputs of implementation should be clearly considered according to JICA's priorities.

To revise the definition of distance technical cooperation

According to *The basic plan of distance technical cooperation* (2002), the definition of distance technical cooperation is '*cooperation which does not involve movement of parties in charge and is not influenced by time and space*' and '*it is technical cooperation which applies the methods of distance education.'*

This definition covers distance lectures and seminars but does not include distance meetings with TV conference systems. According to the result of interviews, distance meetings also contributed to the acceleration and enhancement of the quality of ongoing technical cooperation activities. Hence, it is recommended to re-consider the definition of distance technical cooperation to include actual contributions by several methods.

To create incentives for users

Although contributions to technical cooperation by distance technical cooperation were visible, the number of users who applied for distance cooperation is few. For sustainable and spontaneous utilization by stakeholders, it would be effective to create incentives for users. The incentives should be considered, not by providing a budget and support by a producer, but by motivating users with methods such as providing a prize for best practice. Hence, it is recommended to create a supporting system for these kind of incentives.

Collaboration with international institutions and training organizations

Collaboration with other international institutions and training organization seems effective, as it allows a large number of stakeholders to share contents owned by several organizations and institutions. Hence developing collaboration by sharing lectures or seminar contents between JICA and

other organizations or institutions is recommended. It can enhance programs which are implemented with consideration of MDGs and can be an effective promotion of JICA activities.

2) The basic system of distance technical cooperation at JICA regional offices

To improve the supporting system of distance technical cooperation at JICA regional offices

The support or policy of JICA regional offices directly affects the effective implementation of distance technical cooperation. It can play an important role for the sustainable and strategic utilization of distance technical cooperation. Hence, improving the system at JICA regional offices for distance technical cooperation is recommended.

3) The operation system

To change the role of JICA-Net division from overall management unit to facilitation unit

Since the program started, JICA-Net division has carried out an important role in diffusing distance technical cooperation. The supporting system they operated contributed to increasing the number of contents, and there are several types of practice for effective usage of technical cooperation. On the other hand, without these supporting systems, the number of uses tends to decrease, thus, this result means the incompleteness of utilization distance technical cooperation among JICA stakeholders. It can be considered that the supporting system prevents stakeholders from using distance technical cooperation as their indispensable tool. For more spontaneous use of distance technical cooperation, re-consideration of supporting systems is recommended. Especially, budget and coordination support might be limited, and then the role of JICA-Net division could be as a facilitator which plans, promotes and improves distance technical cooperation.

When JICA-Net division changes its role to that of facilitator, issues related to contents collection and quality maintenance may arise. Hence, a proper supporting system to manage these issues should be considered.

To upgrade service of distance lectures and seminars by internet

Currently, sites are located in the capital of countries. Although distance technical cooperation reduces the movement of stakeholders, sometimes domestic travel is still difficult, especially at times of emergency. Therefore, the introduction of WEB Casting (which sends the pictures and voices of distance lectures and seminars to PCs via internet lines) is recommended. The system could be a back-up system for when TV conference systems face technical troubles. Another advantage would be that it could expand opportunities to share contents with organizations which lack TV conference systems.


JICA