

# Working to Achieve Millennium Development Goals

Challenges shared by the international community toward achieving human development and the eradication of poverty



MDGs set out the provision of education opportunities for all children regardless of gender (China) (Photo by Katsumi Yoshida)

## What are the Millennium Development Goals?

In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders involving 189 countries took place in New York. The Millennium Declaration, which serves as the goals of the international community for the 21st century, was adopted at this meeting. Based on the declaration, eight millennium development goals (MDGs) were compiled as important goals to be shared by the entire international community in order to address the most urgent issues involved with promoting human development. The MDGs cover several areas, including poverty reduction, education, gender, health, and the environment, and consist of 18 targets and 48 indicators, providing clear numerical targets and the deadline of 2015.

In the United Nations General Assembly in September 2005—five years after the Millennium Declaration was adopted—a follow-up summit was held for the mid-term review of the entire declaration including the MDGs. In the outcome document of the summit, the international community announced its strong determination to achieve development goals based on ownership of and partnership among individual countries, actively working to achieve the MDGs.

Figure 3-1 Eight MDGs

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

## JICA's Approach to the Millennium Development Goals

### Human Security—Achieving the MDGs by Focusing on People

In order to further support developing countries in achieving the MDGs, JICA emphasizes the core principle of “human security” with a focus on people. Under this concept of human security, JICA expects that efforts made by developing countries and the outcomes of their achievements in relation to the MDGs will be sustained by means of their ownership through capacity development (developing countries strengthening their own capacity to solve problems in development). With emphasis on the importance of infrastructure as the base to support achievement of the MDGs, JICA strives to contribute to the MDGs by supporting infrastructure development that leads to poverty reduction.

#### 1. Human Security and the MDGs

The MDGs involve development and poverty reduction in the objectives of the Millennium Declaration. Other objectives, such as “peace, security, and disarmament,” “human rights, democra-

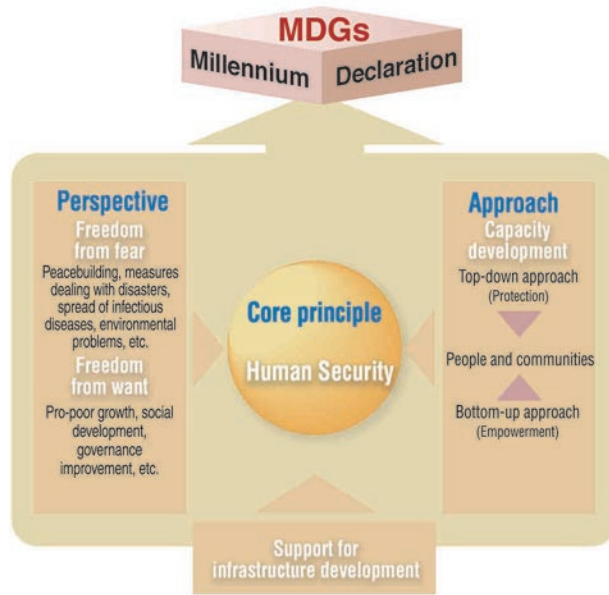
cy, and good governance,” “protecting the vulnerable,” etc., are closely related to one another, and the outcomes of individual efforts are not sustainable unless they are tackled comprehensively.

JICA focuses on people and understands that human security, which pays attention to whole threats that people face, is vital for realizing the principle of the Millennium Declaration. JICA incorporates the perspective of human security into all the programs in order to improve their quality, and at the same time, from the perspective of human security, comprehensively supports peacebuilding processes including reconstruction, along with disaster and conflict prevention for the purpose of supporting developing countries in achieving the MDGs.

#### 2. Capacity Development and the MDGs

Japan has gained knowledge and systems from developed countries in the process of modernization and has applied them to building its own society and institutions. Based on such expe-

**Figure 3-2** JICA's Approach to the MDGs



The MDGs are the specific objectives of the development agenda outlined in the Millennium Declaration.

JICA is working toward achieving the MDGs and sustaining the outcomes of this achievement by providing assistance based on the principle of "human security." This principle has two aspects:

- (1) Perspective: addressing the need for not only "freedom from want" but also "freedom from fear."
  - (2) Approach: applying both top-down and bottom-up approaches to help developing countries enhance their capacities for dealing with their own problems ("capacity development").
- Underpinning these efforts is our cooperation in the area of infrastructure development.

rience, JICA supports human development, organizational strengthening, and institution-building by focusing on the process of capacity development, which empowers people in developing countries to solve their own problems.

By the definition of capacity development, capacity is regarded as the problem-solving ability of a developing country. Capacity is not brought in from outside, but rather is something a country develops itself. Donors in support of capacity development are required to be catalysts that indirectly support endogenous processes so that developing countries can develop their own problem-solving capacities, and not just act as providers of technology, equipment, and capital.

Acknowledging that such a concept of capacity development represents an ideal process of achieving MDGs (Research "Toward Capacity Development of Developing Countries Based on their Ownership," 2006), JICA supports developing countries in achieving the MDGs so that the outcomes of the achievements can be sustained.

### 3. Infrastructure Supporting the Achievement of the MDGs

Following World War II, Japan attained economic growth by developing its infrastructure, productive sectors, and industries. Based on this experience, Japan has provided assistance to developing countries, mainly in Asia, with an emphasis on economic and social infrastructure, thereby greatly contributing to their current development. However, it has been revealed that the benefits of infrastructure development do not always reach the people in need and that infrastructure development has occasionally harmed their living situations and natural environments. With this in mind, JICA redefined infrastructure as the basis necessary for achieving the development goals—including poverty reduction, the MDGs, and economic growth—and eventually realizing the potential of the people.

JICA is focusing more on people than it has in the past based on the "human security" concept, and is striving to contribute to achieving the MDGs by assisting in infrastructure development that will provide the basis for people's livelihood, support the economic growth of the nation and regions, and help reduce poverty.

**Table 3-3** Proportion of MDGs-related Fields in JICA Projects

MDGs-related fields	Portion of total operating cost (fiscal 2005)
Poverty reduction (Goal 1)	30%
Basic education (Goal 2)	4%
Gender equality (Goal 3)	14%
Maternal and child health, reproductive health (Goals 4 and 5)	5%
Infectious disease control (Goal 6)	17%
Environment (Goal 7)	16%
Finance, trading, vocational training, information communication (Goal 8)	13%

**Note:** Some projects are counted more than once in the summation because they encompass several goals. See Figure 3-1 for Goals 1 to 8