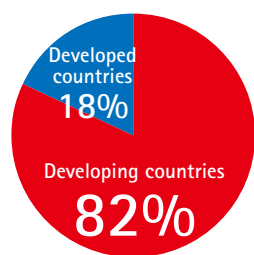


# Why is aid to developing countries so important right now?

Each year, the number of global issues requiring attention grows, from climate change, food security and security to infectious diseases and armed conflict. Unless countries work in concert to address such problems, the outlook for humanity is bleak. As a member of the global community, Japan has a vital role to play in addressing many of today's pressing issues for the sake of a better future for all of the world's people.



## Population Ratio

Source: *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision Population Database*, United Nations

## Issues Faced by Developing Countries Are Also Japan's Problems

Global issues—poverty, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, conflict and terrorism—which disproportionately affect the developing world, cannot be solved by countries acting alone. Such problems transcend borders and continents and pose a grave threat to the entire international community, including Japan. As a developed country, Japan must recognize such problems as its own rather than those of the developing world, and take action accordingly. Poverty, conflict and climate change should not be seen as problems happening in far away places and only glimpsed through the nightly news bulletin. When global stability is threatened, the lives of people in Japan are affected too.

Despite recent economic crises, virtually every person in Japan has access to clean drinking water. All major highways are paved and many stores open 24/7, providing an added sense of late-night security. This convenience and safety, which people in Japan tend to take for granted, is supported by precious energy resources that enable Japan to maintain its vast electrical grid.

Although Japan is one of the world's leading consumers of electric power, its self-sufficiency rate for power generation is only 20%. Furthermore, Japan imports 99.6% of the petroleum it consumes. Were international trading relationships to sour, leading to an era of protectionism across the developed and developing world, Japan would be unable to maintain its current standard of living. In light of these realities, Japan cannot simply focus on its own economic well-being while ignoring the plight of others. We must recognize that in today's highly interconnected world, attitudes that were common in Japan until quite recently are no longer tenable.

## Developing Countries Are Repositories of Tremendous Potential

There are approximately 30 developed and 160 developing countries in the world today, with a huge economic disparity separating the two groups. For example, while more than 50% of young people in Japan pursue higher education, in West and Central Africa 45% of girls and 37% of boys (UNICEF: 2000–2005 statistics) do not even attend elementary school because they are needed to help at home or on the family farm.

Faced with such disparities, it is easy to forget the tremendous human potential of the developing world, which is so often obscured by the daily battle for survival. But from a global perspective, the future of humanity depends heavily on enabling the people of developing countries to realize their potential and contribute to their own development. Not only must Japan offer those people a helping hand in humanitarian support, it must back developing countries' own efforts to build human security, which JICA defines as "focusing on individual people and building societies in which everyone can live with dignity by protecting and empowering individuals and communities that are exposed to actual or potential threats."

In the Japanese media, although the potential of developing countries is often linked to deposits of natural resources or large areas of land that may be utilized for increased food production, such media coverage only provides a very narrow view of developing countries' true potential. According to Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter, the objectives of Japan's ODA are to contribute to the peace and development of the international community, and thereby help ensure Japan's own security and prosperity. Developing countries represent the future hope of humanity. Japan can play an important role in transforming this hope into reality by helping build mutually beneficial relationships that will create new opportunities and drive future prosperity for all people.

## Japan as a Former Aid Recipient

Although Japan now has the world's second largest economy, in the wake of World War II it needed loans from the World Bank to finance major infrastructure projects, such as the first bullet train line (Tokaido Shinkansen) and the Tomei Expressway linking Tokyo with Nagoya. Japan finally completed the repayment of those loans in July 1990. Since Japan's experience of rebuilding its economy with the help of overseas partners is relatively recent, it is able to apply this knowledge to effectively support the efforts of developing countries that are building their own social and economic infrastructure.



The Tokaido Shinkansen commences service in 1964

## Japan's Relationships with Developing Countries Continue to Flourish and Deepen

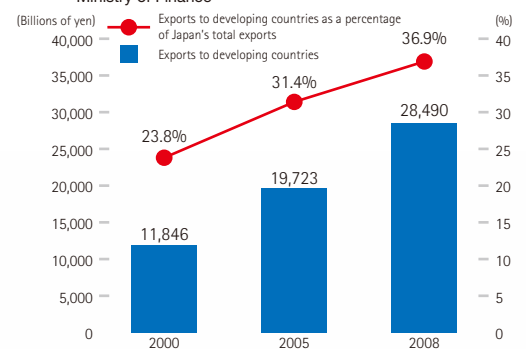
In the field of international cooperation, JICA has accumulated extensive experience and disseminates a broad array of information. In 2008, despite the holding of two major international meetings in Japan—the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD-IV) in May and the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July—and rising public interest in such global issues as food and energy security, public approval of Japan's international cooperation policy only showed a very slight increase. This was according to an opinion poll on foreign diplomacy conducted in October 2008 by the Japanese government's Cabinet Office. Subsequently, Japan's fiscal 2009 ODA budget was reduced for the 11th consecutive year.

It appears that a range of factors have contributed to a general tendency among the Japanese public to be inward looking. These factors include Japan's long period of low economic growth since the 1990s, uncertainty about the future and low empathy toward developing countries. Notwithstanding, the Japanese economy and individual citizens' lives are affected—directly and indirectly—by global conditions relating to food, natural resources, energy and finance. Hence, it is crucial for the Japanese public to clearly recognize why the stability and development of developing countries is crucial to Japan's survival and prosperity. It is also important for people to understand Japan's close interdependence with developing countries. By understanding Japan's true situation, Japanese citizens will be in a much better position to support Japan's role in promoting international cooperation.

In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, Japan's relationships with developing countries continue to flourish and deepen. In such an era, the interests of one country, such as Japan, cannot be separated from the greater global good. We must each measure our own actions and attitudes based on this key principle.

### Japan's Exports to Developing Countries

Source: Prepared by JICA study team based on Trade Statistics, Ministry of Finance



### Japan's Imports from Developing Countries

Source: Prepared by JICA study team based on Trade Statistics, Ministry of Finance

