

Director-General Satoshi Yoshida highlights JICA's cooperation in the LAC region



On December 2, 2020, Director-General Satoshi Yoshida of JICA's Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Department, provided an overview of JICA's engagements in the LAC region at a virtual event hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) titled, *Leveraging Japan-LAC Relations Post-COVID-19*. Joined by a group of esteemed speakers, Yoshida detailed the various approaches JICA has undertaken to engage with the region and reaffirmed Japan's commitment to working closely with LAC countries as they seek to recover from the economic and social ramifications of COVID-19.

As one of the panelists of the event, Director-General Yoshida underscored JICA's dedication to advance Human Security to 'ensure all people can live with dignity, and free from fear and want' and explained that JICA's regional strategy centers on three pillars of cooperation: (1) strengthening quality infrastructure investment; (2) tackling climate change and environmental degradation; and (3) reducing income inequality. Yoshida also reiterated JICA's dedication to work alongside Latin American countries, in line with Japan's commitment to the SDGs, to promote Universal Health Coverage, enhance disaster risk reduction and resilience capacities, and support women's empowerment and participation.

In reference to COVID-19, Yoshida explained that JICA has provided the region with emergency personal protective equipment to support medical workers, as well as technical



Director-General Satoshi Yoshida (upper right) answers questions from the panel

cooperation to strengthen COVID-19 protocols and establish safe and hygienic workplaces in partner countries. Furthermore, Yoshida shared examples of JICA's infrastructure investments in Latin America to upgrade water and sanitation systems and water treatment plants to combat the spread of infectious diseases. He also referenced JICA's efforts to strengthen health systems to reach the most vulnerable populations, including indigenous communities. He further highlighted JICA's engagements to strengthen local capacity building for medical professionals and establish trust between local communities and medical institutions. Finally, Yoshida also shared examples of how JICA has supported

Director-General Satoshi Yoshida highlights JICA's cooperation in the LAC region



LAC governments by providing financial support through the use of concessional loans to enable governments to readily provide emergency packages to its people.

Looking ahead, Yoshida expressed that JICA will engage in a three-pronged approach of promoting 'prevention, precaution and treatment' to address COVID-19. As part of this comprehensive COVID-19 strategy, JICA will continue to invest in partner countries' WASH sector, as well as provide sustained support for health systems strengthening and capacity development.

In addition to the comments made by Yoshida, other distinguished participants, including Martín Rama, the World Bank's Chief Economist of the LAC region; Susan Hubbard, Senior Associate of the Japan Center for International Exchange; and Tetsuro Narita, Senior Specialist at the IDB Lab Investment Unit, spoke about ongoing regional challenges and provided recommendations to further strengthen collaborations between Japan and Latin America in a post-COVID world.

Specifically, Rama suggested deepening Japan-LAC engagements in the tech and infrastructure sectors, while also recommending strengthening partnerships to improve the policy environment in the LAC region. For her part, Susan Hubbard expressed that more international collaboration will be needed to provide successful vaccine delivery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and retrain the health workforce. Finally, Tetsuro Narita, highlighted that the LAC region and Japan may find opportunities to deepen collaborations to ethically use Artificial Intelligence to maximize data efficiency, while also prioritizing data security. He also suggested collaborations to address common challenges posed by both Japan and Latin America's aging societies, including effectively matching supply and demand in labor markets and re-skilling older generations.