

Executive Summary

TO OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS FIGHTING AGAINST COVID-19

BACKGROUND OF THIS PAPER: JICA has gathered extensive information of the current situation and efforts against COVID-19 around the world including the voices of international organizations, experts and key government leaders, utilizing our human resources and organizational networks. As a message to our friends and partners fighting against COVID-19 in developing countries, we send out this quick analysis and urgent commitment which states an outlook of the current situation of Japan and the world, comparative analysis of related factors to COVID-19 pandemics and JICA's commitment based on the said information.

SITUATION IN THE WORLD: The COVID-19 pandemic has swept across countries at rates faster than many of us had predicted, and the world has not been able to contain the outbreak to date. In the metropolitan area of high income countries, the outbreak continues to overwhelm health systems, causing unprecedented damage to people's livelihoods and economies. High income countries have invested heavily over the years in strengthening their health systems, but the current threat has left many of these countries devastated. For those countries, **COVID-19 raises fundamental questions about the nature of our modern society.** There is a growing debate on the need to radically reimagine the way our modern society operates by reviewing the benefits and detriments of today's profit, efficiency driven economy.

All countries affected by COVID-19 have needed to respond to **the three dimensions of the crisis:** (1) the health crisis directly caused as a result of COVID-19; (2) a crisis across entire health care systems as COVID-19 overwhelms them; and (3) a crisis beyond the health sector, including impacts on political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. For coping with these dimensions, **many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)**, who do not always have adequate health systems and are more vulnerable to various crises, **have demonstrated ownership over their challenges, heeding the advice provided by experts and drawing on past lessons**, and the lessons of other countries. They have been inventive and have worked hard to hold their ground. At the same time, however, the severe restrictions placed on daily activities have limited some health services and have placed a heavy burden on people's livelihoods and country economies. In light of these, **resilient and flexible governance that accepts and encourages the "voluntary action of self-motivated individuals" and allows the "power of science" to be used appropriately** will become extremely important.

JAPAN IN COMPARISON TO THE WORLD: In Japan, the number of deaths per million people has remained low. In terms of the way people behave, Japanese authorities promoted self-isolation and staying at home. Japan's strategy was to reduce the number of deaths by focusing on contact tracing, namely through a "cluster approach", to prevent subsequent massive infections. Compared to other countries, Japan was found to have some unique features when it comes to responding to health crises, including **strong community awareness of hygiene and lifestyle habits, low obesity rate and resilient health systems to infectious disease threat with (i) public health function centered on health administration and "hoken-jo", (ii) clinical medicine that supports advanced medical services and (iii) national health insurance system that ensures people's access to care.** Correlations

of COVID-19 deaths with aging and urbanization, as potential related factors, were also examined. Through the coming few months, we will continue to examine these factors and share the results of observation and analysis with the world.

GLOBAL RESPONSE INITIATIVES: Although high income countries and international organizations have pledged their commitments to support LMICs, it will be extremely difficult to close the funding gap in a short period. We should do everything in its power in solidarity to develop and manufacture vaccines and therapeutics as quickly as possible, ensuring that they reach all people will be just as essential. At the same time, there is an urgent need for the world to recognize the limitations of standalone disease control measures and **to work in unison on comprehensive measures that focus, in particular, on strengthening health systems.**

JICA'S COMMITMENT: Based on the global situation and response above mentioned, we recognize that COVID-19 has also served as a wake-up call for the need to examine a new look on a healthy society and rethink the state of our modern society and world order. If we overcome this pandemic and use it as a learning opportunity, we can build up this experience to work toward establishing a "New World" that confronts the challenges of modern society. In the "New World," the way nations protect their citizens, or elicit their voluntary actions, as well the way cities operate, and how people work, learn and communicate may be better than what they are now.

JICA would like to pay tribute to **the ownership that each country is demonstrating in its own way.** We have learnt that the governments and self-motivated individuals in many LMICs have shown ingenuity, cooperation, and great ownership in dealing with difficult circumstance.

We intend to take on this challenge as a rare opportunity to enhance and improve our operations to continue to respond to the urgent needs of low- and middle-income countries, while JICA has now restricted many of its staff and related stakeholders from traveling domestically and internationally. In addition, based on the recognition **"building on a common global awareness on the crisis"**, we may be able to further strengthen our mutual solidarity and create the "New World" together. Thus, now JICA has made the following three commitments and will continue to work with LMICs as well as with our partners around the world.

- JICA will do our best to **respond to the urgent needs** of LMICs with ingenuity. JICA will fully utilize our human resources and organizational network in the world, which we have developed over the years, and will simultaneously work to rapidly expand new networks and utilize those resources.
- JICA will work harder than ever to build **resilient and flexible health systems and make universal health coverage (UHC) a reality** around the world through making the most of our scientific knowledge and experience. We have been reminded of the importance of infectious disease control, and prevention and health promotion.
- JICA will **work toward establishing the sustainable "New World"** founded on trust and collaboration to realize **"human security"** and **JICA's vision of "leading the world with trust."**