

South Asia

Building Resilient Social Systems That Can Fight the Pandemic

Significant Deterioration of Economic and Social Conditions

South Asia, where young people under age 25 account for about half of the regional population of 1.8 billion,¹ has massive potential to become a global center of economic growth on the back of the expansion of industry, consumption, and the labor market. Meanwhile, with the number of people living in absolute poverty in the region (about 220 million) which make up one-third of the world's total,² the region has been calling for reducing various disparities and building inclusive and sustainable communities as aimed at in the SDGs. Now, the huge necessity has been further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic dragged down the global economy, South Asia is clearly one of the most affected regions in the world, as the regional economy shrank 6.7% in 2020.³ The pandemic, which once seemed to be under control, exploded again in February and March 2021, and the region is still suffering from strained health-care resources and stagnant economies. In addition, the region faces constantly changing social and security conditions as well as vulnerability to natural disasters.

Cooperation with a Focus on Building Resilient Societies

The stability and development of South Asia, a region of geopolitical importance linking ASEAN with the Middle East and Africa, are crucially vital for the stability and development of the world, including Japan. As mentioned above, however, the pandemic has further highlighted the vulnerabilities of each country in the region. Toward helping to build resilient societies that can cope with the above challenges, JICA has been proactively delivering responsive cooperation with two major missions of achieving *human security* and *quality growth*.

In fiscal 2020, JICA's cooperation for the region focused on



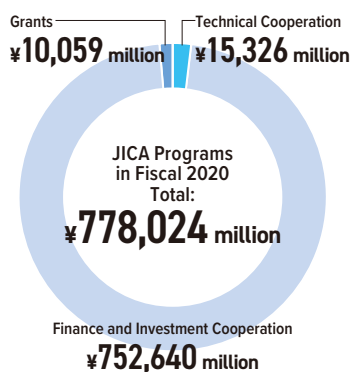
India: To prevent infectious diseases, JICA has been implementing the "Achhi Aadat (Good Habit) campaign," designed to encourage hygiene practices such as handwashing, nail hygiene, and wearing masks in the correct way. A Hindi-dubbed video version of the animated "How to Wash Your Hands Properly" is introduced in the campaign.

(1) strengthening health systems; (2) improving access to basic human needs such as education and a decent living environment; (3) reinvigorating the economy and pursuing employment stability; (4) increasing industrial competitiveness, including improving the investment environment; (5) strengthening intra- and inter-regional connectivity; and (6) endeavoring for peace, stability, and security in the region. JICA continues to work with partner countries and various stakeholders such as international organizations in line with the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure," a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," and other visions and initiatives stated in the Japanese government's key policies and intergovernmental joint statements.

1. United Nations, "World Population Prospects 2019."

2. Calculated based on data from World Bank, "Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle."

3. World Bank, "Global Economic Prospects, January 2021."



	Total value of JICA programs
India	¥381,707 million
Bangladesh	¥376,806 million
Maldives	¥5,174 million
Afghanistan	¥4,262 million
Pakistan	¥4,192 million
Nepal	¥3,205 million
Sri Lanka	¥1,454 million
Bhutan	¥1,224 million



The total length of rail and underground rail segments developed under financial cooperation projects that were completed between January 2005 and July 2021¹

1. The figure records only the segments of civil engineering works carried out with ODA Loans.



The number of medical facilities developed under financial cooperation projects that were completed between September 2010 and July 2021²

2. The figure includes facilities for which only equipment was procured; it excludes those for which only vaccines and medicines were procured.

Note: For the total value of JICA programs, see the note on "Program by Region" on page 27.