

Toward a Green Recovery

JICA provides various types of development cooperation for the global environment as well as people living there. It works with developing countries to address a wide range of challenges, including those that have come to be perceived for the first time through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Burkina Faso: This JICA volunteer is teaching how to use a simple pedal-operated hand-washer. Timely and appropriate hand-washing is important for preventing the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19. JICA incorporates the provision of hand-washing equipment and hygiene awareness activities into many of its projects in the developing world to support infection prevention, health promotion, and public health improvement. (Photo: Akio Iizuka)

Overview of the Issue

Our societies are inseparable from the global environment

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us how the global environment is inter-connected with our societies and livelihoods. There are heightened concerns that environmental changes and ecological disruptions caused by economic activity might increase cases of zoonotic diseases; a renewed recognition that infectious diseases and environmental pollutants easily go beyond national borders and that water, sanitation, and hygiene management

plays an important role in preventing such diseases and pollution; growing apprehension that pandemics can be exacerbated by disasters; and the list goes on. Efforts to address these intricately intertwined challenges, coupled with decarbonization and other climate actions, are accelerating around the world in anticipation of a post-COVID era.

Strategies

Cross-sectoral cooperation

To overcome the social and economic vulnerabilities such as



50 million hectares

The approximate total area covered by JICA's technical cooperation in nature conservation in fiscal 2014–2019, which is 1.3 times larger than the total area of Japan



28 million

The approximate number of people who gained access to safe water with JICA's cooperation in fiscal 2011–2020



those laid bare by the pandemic, JICA aims to Build Back Better, that is, to reconstruct social systems so that they will become more resilient with less disaster risk. JICA will formulate new cooperation approaches for the future to achieve a green recovery,* a cross-sectoral initiative that focuses on climate action; water, sanitation, and hygiene; the environment; and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Specifically, JICA will encourage and support activities aimed at achieving the following goals:

1. A healthy and safe urban environment

In an effort to maintain a healthy and comfortable urban environment, JICA will extend development cooperation that is aimed at building the capacity of government entities and other public-sector organizations that are responsible for water, sanitation, and hygiene and environmental management toward the broader goal of realizing a sound material-cycle society with minimal environmental stress.

2. Supply of safe water and securing of water resources

Water supports people's lives, health, and economic activity. It is essential for *human security* as well. JICA will provide cooperation for securing and managing water resources as well as for the management of water utilities that supply safe water to people. In addition, JICA will proactively promote awareness-raising activities about sanitation and handwashing, especially for infectious disease prevention.

3. Harmony between human activity and the natural environment

JICA will work to prevent the loss and degradation of the natural environment and promote harmony between the environment and human activity, including economic activity. So that people can continue to enjoy the diverse bounty of nature, JICA aims to create a sustainable society through (1) good use of local traditional expertise; (2) capacity development for the administrative agencies concerned; and (3) collaboration with local residents.

4. A Resilient society that incorporates DRR

JICA will aim to reduce casualties and economic damage due to natural hazards through the promotion of pre-disaster investment in DRR. From the perspective of DRR, JICA will contribute to building a resilient society that can adequately cope with threats such as COVID-19.

Activities and Achievements

Extending cooperation in times of emergency

In many cases, developing countries do not have adequate human resources, technologies, or funds. Despite the urgent need to cope with the pandemic, they were often faced with many difficulties resulting from urban lockdowns and other causes. For its part, JICA also had difficulty continuing some of its operations as Japan was no exception in issuing a series of states of emergency



Supporting the sustainable lives of residents

Timor-Leste: Local residents are harvesting maize grown by hillside farming that embraces soil improvement and environmental conservation. There has recently been a pronounced loss and degradation of forest resources in the country. Slash-and-burn cultivation is considered a major cause. JICA is promoting permanent organic farming under the Project for Community-Based Sustainable Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Phase 2.

that entailed restrictions to communication and travel. Nevertheless, JICA was convinced that essential work must not be stopped in order to save lives and maintain health as the pandemic raged. With this conviction, JICA carried out the following activities during fiscal 2020 [→ see the Project on page 50]:

- Cooperation for sustainability and capacity building for waste management services that are indispensable for maintaining urban sanitation. This involved, among other things, protecting the health and safety of service providers and incorporating additional cooperation activities for proper management of medical and infectious waste into original projects.
- Cooperation for water utilities. This involved procuring disinfectants, materials, and equipment for operation and maintenance and fuel for operating water treatment plants as well as supporting hygiene awareness activities that encouraged handwashing and the like.
- Provision of materials and equipment to DRR organizations that were coping with the pandemic as part of crisis management, in addition to fundamental DRR efforts.

JICA conducted timely surveys and studies on the relationship between the maintenance of such urban functions and anti-COVID-19 measures.

Recognizing anew the importance of nature conservation in terms of green recovery and zoonosis, JICA also started exploring new types of cooperation.

*An approach to post-pandemic recovery that focuses on climate and environmental action and aims to reconstruct societies so that they will be more sustainable.

Providing supplies and promoting awareness-raising activities

Essential workers are literally essential for public life. Their importance has grown amid the spread of COVID-19. In developing countries, however, the dearth of sanitation and hygiene supplies has made it difficult for essential workers to continue their services.

This situation has prompted JICA to provide much-needed supplies in a timely manner and support sanitation and hygiene awareness activities through many of its projects in partner countries.

For example, JICA provided Bangladesh, Palestine, and Sri Lanka with personal protective equipment (PPE) for public-area cleaners and waste collectors, among other essential workers. A case in point is the Project for Strengthening of Solid Waste Management in Dhaka North City, Dhaka South City and Chittagong City in Bangladesh. In this project, JICA locally procured masks and gloves to protect the safety of such workers. JICA developed an infection prevention leaflet and a pocket-size manual for them and remotely gave instructions on sanitation. The project also produced a separate leaflet for general households to publicize safe ways to dispose of garbage.

In Mozambique, JICA cooperated in organizing study meetings on COVID-19 and producing an awareness poster. As the practice of reusing used and discarded masks had become a problem, the poster contained instructions to “cut used masks” with scissors, dispose of them, and then



JICA contributed 3,000 masks to the National Coordination for Disaster Reduction of Guatemala as part of the Project on Capacity Development for Disaster Risk Management in Central America, Phase 2.

wash the hands. The African Clean Cities Platform, which was established by the Japanese government and JICA, among other international organizations, drew up guidance on solid waste management (SWM) that incorporates measures against infections.

Coordination with water supply programs and DRR cooperation

As part of its water supply programs, JICA provided Nepal, Tajikistan, Palestine, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan with much-needed disinfectants as well as materials and equipment for operating

and maintaining water services, thus supporting the supply of safe water, which is essential for handwashing. In two ongoing projects in Ecuador—the Project for Safe and Resilient Cities for Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster and the Project on Capacity Development for Disaster Risk Management in Central America, Phase 2—JICA provided masks, PPE, and other sanitation supplies for DRR agencies that were working to cope with the pandemic. These supplies were utilized by many essential workers, most notably those at hospitals and on the frontline of prevention activities.

VOICE

We supplied safe water despite the pandemic



Hon. Awar Yar Paul Kuol
General Manager, South Sudan Urban Water Corporation (SSUWC)

With fuel and chemicals provided by JICA, we were able to supply safe water to the citizens of Juba despite the pandemic. Masks, handwashing agents, and other sanitation supplies from JICA were useful for protecting the safety of SSUWC personnel. SSUWC appreciates JICA's passionate and persistent cooperation that includes not only such emergency assistance but also other support, including training for our employees who could not receive adequate education due to the conflict.

VOICE

Community-based disaster management systems in action



Ayumi Takebayashi
Former JICA Expert, Project on Capacity Development for Disaster Risk Management in Central America, Phase 2
Project Formulation Advisor, JICA Nicaragua Office

I saw community-based voluntary organizations for DRR and municipal officials in charge of DRR working together efficiently in coronavirus infection prevention, food assistance, and emergency response. I was convinced that this was proof that disaster management systems developed through the project were demonstrating their maneuverability. JICA supported these activities through the local procurement of masks, rubber gloves, liquid disinfectants, and other supplies.

PROJECT

Working with Partner Countries to Address Marine Plastic Waste

Action urgently needed in developing countries

Marine plastic waste has recently been in the spotlight as a serious global environmental problem. Plastic waste generated chiefly on land flows into the sea via rivers and other runoff channels without being managed properly. It is feared that this will have adverse effects on the marine environment and ecosystems as well as on tourism, fisheries, and coastal residential environments.

Scientists warn that plastic waste can continue to accumulate without being degraded for several hundred or thousand years. Addressing this problem calls for global action. In particular, developing countries with inadequate environmental pollution control are urgently required to take action.

JICA is actively engaged in tackling this issue in addition to its traditional cooperation in SWM.

Seeking to resolve the issue through regional collective efforts

In fiscal 2020, an international joint research project was launched in Thailand aimed at reducing marine plastic waste in the region of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The joint research, titled “Project for Formation of a Center of Excellence for Marine Plastic Pollution Studies in the Southeast Asian Seas,” was initiated under the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS). In this research, Japan—which leads the world in this field—teamed up with Thailand, which faces a serious urban waste problem, to come up with an action plan for submission



In March 2021, JICA Headquarters in Tokyo and AEPW in Singapore held a ceremony online for the signing of an MOU on plastic waste management (above). Plastic waste littering a Thai beach (right) (Photo: Atsuhiko Isobe)



to the Thai government. The hope is that the action plan will serve as a model for ASEAN as a whole.

JICA offers opportunities for comprehensive learning of what the international community and Japan have been doing to address the issue. This involves inviting public administrators from partner countries to Japan to develop human resources responsible for marine waste management. Lectures and site-visit opportunities are given by Japanese universities, local governments, and businesses.

For Caribbean island countries as well as Latin American countries with long coastlines, JICA conducted studies to assess the state of the flow of plastics into the sea and to explore the possibility of cooperation that capitalizes on technologies owned by Japanese businesses. Going forward, JICA plans to send advisors to the region.

Cooperating with international NPOs

In March 2021, JICA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW). AEPW is an international nonprofit organization (NPO) partnering with governments, environmental and economic development NGOs, and civil society around the world to address the challenge of ending plastic waste in the environment. JICA and AEPW will leverage each other's strengths and resources to strategically tackle the issue of waste plastics and thus contribute to the transition toward a circular economy.

VOICE

Tackling the issue with a strong partnership



Takehide Anada
Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW)

The issue of plastic waste is so complex that cooperation by all stakeholders in the plastic value chain is crucial. As of June 2021, we were engaged in over 30 projects around the world in cooperation with various partners. I am convinced that a strong partnership with JICA will have an immeasurably favorable impact.