

Advisory Committee on Evaluation

JICA has set up an external advisory committee to obtain advice on project evaluation. The recommendations from the committee are fed back into the evaluation system and method for further improvement.

In order to ensure transparency and objectivity in the project evaluation system as well as to enhance the evaluation system and improve evaluation quality, JICA receives advice on 1) the guidelines and implementation of evaluation, and 2) the structure and overall system of JICA's evaluation.

The Committee, chaired by Hiromitsu Muta, Executive Vice-president of Tokyo Institute of Technology, consists of experts with in-depth knowledge of international aid as well as evaluation expertise from various fields, such as international organizations, academics, NGO, media, and private groups, etc.

Below is an outline of the advice and recommendations received from Committee members at the second and third meetings convened in 2009.

From the 2nd Meeting

- 1) **Evaluation of general financial assistance:** It is important to differentiate between countries and regions where Japan has a significant role because of the promotion of aid coordination and countries where Japan has a small presence.
- 2) **Evaluation of pseudo programs for measuring financial and technical cooperation proposed in Master Plan:** It is understood that after the merger between JICA and JBIC, it became easier to select and develop projects during the preparatory study phase, without becoming caught up in the type of cooperation scheme. For future evaluations, it may become important to evaluate projects that were included in the same scope at the preparatory study phase as a single group.
- 3) **Implementation of ex-post evaluation by external evaluators:** JICA's policy to establish the accuracy of the evaluation (detail/simplicity) according to the scale of the project is appropriate from the standpoint of making effective use of resources. For desk evaluations, it is necessary to keep in mind the burden on JICA's overseas offices.
- 4) **Support for enhancing evaluation capacity:** It is desirable if developing countries do the evaluation first and then share the findings. In some cases the wishes of aid recipient countries will be made known, and this will also lead to sustainability.
- 5) **Projects subject to evaluation:** It may be more useful for devel-

opment of future projects if evaluations are limited to major projects and more detailed lessons learned are derived and fed back.

- 6) **Basic policy of new rating system:** It is suggested that the following are incorporated: a mechanism to systematically evaluate the impact of cooperation among all three schemes; the perspective regarding the impact of establishing cooperation program and improving sustainability.
- 7) **Annual Evaluation Report 2009 (draft) and preparing policy on New JICA Project Evaluation Guideline:** JICA should consolidate the evaluation findings, come up with a mechanism to make them useful to future projects, reflect the findings in the new guideline, and make practical use of them. If JICA in its annual report describes how it will address the derived lessons learned and advice as well as how it has drawn on the previous fiscal year's lessons learned and recommendations to improve its projects, readers will be able to understand the feedback function and status.
- 8) **Concluding remarks from chairperson:** This fiscal year is the first fiscal year for actually conducting an integrated evaluation of all three schemes and is an important year in terms of this fiscal year's implementation methodology orienting future evaluations. It is hoped that JICA also makes efforts to plan projects from the viewpoint of evaluations.

From the 3rd Meeting

- 1) **Implementation of staff questionnaire aimed at promoting use of findings and formulation of new project evaluation guideline:** It is important to further enhance staff interest in evaluations, appropriately learn from the lessons of previous evaluations and make use of them in the field. Therefore, questionnaires aimed at promoting the use of evaluation findings should be continued, and processes and/or mechanisms for improving feedback should be considered.
- 2) **Consideration of ex-post evaluation system (simple evaluation system, impact evaluation, rating, general financial assistance):** Rather than simple cost comparisons, cost examinations of Grant Aid projects need to also consider specifications, lifespan, and transfer technology, as well as measure qualitative effects. It is also necessary to decide at the time the Grant Aid is provided whether to attach priority to quality or volume. While impact evaluations need to take into account cost effectiveness, their attempts to clarify the cause-effect relationship and give quantitative explanations of the impact are highly regarded.
- 3) **Introduction of Grant Aid ex-ante evaluation:** It is important to gauge outputs, but it is also necessary to take into account outcomes as directions where the project is headed.

- 4) **Consideration of program evaluation method:** With a view to achieving the program goal, it is necessary to consider the transition process, including the adjustment mechanism and internalization of the counterpart country's system.

- 5) **Status of formulation of Annual Evaluation Report:** Efforts should be made to use expressions that are plain and understandable from the readers' perspective.

6) Other comments:

- The Government Revitalization Unit's screenings and items pointed out in the DAC Peer Review of Japan are matters which have been discussed also by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation. Although JICA is being conscious of PDCA and increasingly recognizing the importance of evaluations, a sincere response is needed for issues JICA has not yet been able to achieve. In particular, it needs to give priority to evaluation-related PR and present the effects in an easy to understand manner.
- With ODA budget cuts and the limited number of personnel in JICA's Evaluation Department, JICA is required to have creativity with the evaluation system, in order to focus on issues which should be explored without narrowing the scope of evaluation.