

# Toward Improving Operations Evaluation

**In order to improve the quality of future projects, operations evaluation requires the perspective of contributing to improve development outcomes by appropriately identifying the effects of projects. In this chapter, some efforts to improve JICA's operations evaluation are described.**

## ● Introduction

JICA has been making efforts to improve operations evaluation, including the enhancement of quality, the strengthening of the feedback function and the improvement of accountability to the public.

This chapter describes some efforts to improve operations

evaluation in order to implement effective projects which have been undertaken since the inauguration of a new JICA. Other efforts to improve project planning, identify development issues that should be solved and establish quantitatively measurable indicators, are also stated below.

## Previous Efforts to Improve Operations Evaluation

### Approach 1: Improving the quality of evaluation

#### ○ Improving Operations Evaluation

As an international trend to implement more effective projects, both donor and partner countries have been endeavouring to strengthen results-based management<sup>\*1</sup>. JICA has also undertaken a variety of efforts with the recognition that the improvement of the quality of operations evaluation is essential to promote results-based management.

At the project planning stage, JICA has endeavoured to better define not only the output of the project, how input changes in response to the project's activities, but also the outcome of the project which changes toward the improvement of development issues. The establishment of indicators is also considered to confirm the extent of the respective achievements.

JICA has been promoting baseline studies, particularly in terms of the necessity understanding the situation prior to the launch of a project in order to accurately identify changes brought about by the project. For more effective implementation of baseline studies, JICA conducted an analysis of the current status of baseline studies covering Technical Cooperation projects in FY2012 (see pp. 44-45).

In implementing operations evaluation, JICA has established a consistent evaluation system for the three assistance schemes of Technical Cooperation, ODA Loans and Grant Aid covering from ex-ante to ex-post evaluation. The New JICA Guidelines for Project Evaluation (hereinafter referred to as the "Guidelines") has also been formulated, thereby striving to enhance the quality of operations evaluation and facilitate the utilization of evaluation results by realigning the system and method of operations evaluation and the results-based approach.

In implementing ex-post evaluation JICA has introduced a unified ex-post evaluation system for the three assistance schemes. Detailed ex-post evaluations by external evaluators are

implemented for a project over 1 billion yen to enhance the quality of evaluation and ensure its objectivity.

As part of efforts to promote results based management, JICA has been making efforts to obtain more appropriate recommendations and lessons learned from the results of ex-post evaluation and promote their utilization. In the detailed evaluation, for example, JICA conducts feedback seminars for implementing agencies in partner countries to share the evaluation results, and promotes their more effective utilization for the improvement of future projects. In FY2010, JICA initiated efforts to set specific themes of evaluation for projects that were expected to yield useful lessons learned so that lessons learned from such projects could be utilized for the feedback to other similar future projects.

For projects ranging from 200 million yen to less than 1 billion yen, JICA conducts internal ex-post evaluations through JICA overseas offices (see p. 22). In FY2010, JICA implemented internal ex-post evaluations on an experimental basis to build up the system and establish the implementation structure, evaluation methods and procedures. In FY2011, JICA has introduced internal ex-post evaluations and increased the number of projects. It is expected that the implementation of internal evaluations will enhance the quality of ex-post evaluations and strengthen the monitoring capacity of projects by JICA overseas offices.

#### ○ Promotion of a New Evaluation Method

Based on the diversification of needs of assistance by developing countries as well as the tendency to focus on development effect among international institutions and bilateral aid agencies, JICA has strived to develop new evaluation methods.

In order to accurately identify changes brought about by projects, JICA has conducted impact evaluations. Through rigorous comparison by collecting and analysing statistical data, the results

<sup>\*1</sup> Results-based management is defined as a "management strategy that focuses on performance as well as the achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts" and represents a set of processes to utilize the results of "plan formulation strategy," "performance measurement" and "evaluation" for management.

of impact evaluations help to identify more precisely changes brought about by a project. JICA has so far conducted impact evaluations on such projects as construction of irrigation facilities, primary education support, improvement of school management, and improvement of regional health systems. At the same time, JICA is also examining ways to make effective use of the impact evaluation method for project management.

JICA has also conducted “thematic evaluations” in which certain specific themes are set, such as region, issue and assistance modalities, and projects related to such themes are evaluated under evaluation criteria. The results of thematic evaluations are expected to be utilized in the identification of related development issues and in the formation of projects with relevant themes in the future. For outlines of thematic evaluations implemented in FY2012, see pp. 44-49.

## ○ Support to increase evaluation capacity

As described above, JICA has developed the Guidelines to unify the common standards of operations evaluation at each evaluation stage on the PDCA cycle, and realigned the systems and methods of its operations evaluation. In order to further promote the use of the Guidelines, JICA developed multimedia teaching materials of the Guidelines in Japanese, English, Spanish and French languages. To disseminate the learning materials internally, JICA held remote seminars for national staffs of its overseas offices in FY2010. The Guidelines and teaching materials produced in each language are available on the JICA website for smoother implementation of consistent operations evaluations.

JICA has provided support in various areas, not only in the improvement of evaluation capacity within JICA, but also that of developing countries and emerging donors. See Column 1 for examples of the support given to enhance the evaluation capacity of developing countries and emerging donors.

## Column 1: Support for Enhancement of Evaluation Capacity of Developing Countries and Emerging Donors

### ● Seminar on Evaluation of Japanese ODA Projects

JICA holds “Seminars on the evaluation of Japanese ODA projects” for staff working in the aid coordination offices and project executing agencies of developing countries. This seminar is intended to promote participants’ understanding of JICA’s operations evaluation methods and system through lectures, workshops and visits to the sites of infrastructure projects in Japan.

In the past decade, JICA held seminars mainly on the operations evaluation of ODA Loans. In FY2012, a seminar was held on the operations evaluation of Technical Cooperation Projects, with 18 participants from 17 countries for 12 days from December 3rd to 14th, 2012. After returning to their countries, the participants are expected to disseminate the knowledge they obtained from the seminar within their organizations.

### ● Joint evaluation with developing countries

Improving the evaluation capacity of project executing and supervising agencies in developing countries further increases their ownership, and contributes to more efficient and effective implementation of JICA’s projects. For that purpose, JICA has so far conducted joint ex-post evaluations in Vietnam and the

Philippines.

### ● Partnership with emerging donors

Along with economic growth in developing countries, former aid recipients are emerging as new donors. They include the Republic of Korea (ROK), which has graduated from foreign aid, as well as Thailand and the People’s Republic of China. In order to enable these emerging donors as well as Japan to implement more effective aid, JICA shares its experiences of operations evaluation to increase their operations evaluation capacity.

In December 2012, JICA and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) had their third regular meeting in Tokyo. Discussions were also held on inter-agency information sharing and partnerships of operations evaluation. Based on the results of the meeting, an official sent by KOICA participated in the “Seminar on the evaluation of Japanese ODA projects,” as an observer to be shared JICA’s operations evaluation, and also delivered a lecture on KOICA’s evaluation system. In addition, JICA also has regular exchanges of views with the Development Cooperation Fund of the Export-Import Bank of Korea (EDCF) and the Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China.

## Approach 2: Strengthening of Feedback Function

### ○ Improvement of Feedback Mechanism: Utilization of Lessons learned and Recommendations

Through the utilization of evaluation results, JICA has attempted to appropriately reflect lessons learned and recommendations obtained from operations evaluations in future projects to improve its operations. The lessons learned from similar projects are described in the column, “utilization of lessons learned from similar projects in the past” in the ex-ante evaluation paper, which was

prepared on the basis of the results of ex-ante evaluation at the stage of project formulation.

Through the ex-post evaluations, JICA is making an effort to describe the lessons learned and recommendations which can be referred to by those in charge of similar projects.

Column 2: Examples of Utilization of Evaluation Results at the Planning Stage introduces examples of lessons learned through the evaluation being utilized in the formation of different projects.

## Column 2: Examples of Utilization of Evaluation Results at the Planning Stage

### ● Indonesia, 3R Capacity Development Support for Proper Waste Management Project (Technical Cooperation)

In the project, “Implementation support for 3R<sup>\*2</sup> INITIATIVE of Hanoi City for Cyclical Society” in Vietnam, JICA supported the formulation of a city ordinance concerning waste in Hanoi city. Particularly in order to set a model project in place and implement it continuously even after the completion of the aid project, JICA supported Hanoi city in promoting an enactment of the ordinance that states the responsibility of parties concerned and necessary fiscal measures. For the formulation of the draft ordinance, several meetings were held among parties concerned, including the Vietnamese central government, the Hanoi municipal government, public corporations, and citizens’ groups to develop a system to reflect the opinions of participants in the draft ordinance and to allow all the parties concerned to get proactively involved.

Based on these lessons learned, JICA developed a plan for this project by placing greater emphasis on the support for the development of ministerial and municipal ordinances of Hanoi, which are necessary for the continuous implementation of 3R activities and waste management activities. As the project is expected to establish more effective systems and organizational buildings, participatory workshops and joint monitoring by the central and local governments are incorporated as activities in the project.

### ● Philippines, Mindanao Sustainable Agrarian and Agriculture Development Project. (ODA Loans)

According to the results of ex-post evaluations of similar projects in agricultural development, the introduction of commercial crops on top of subsistence crops and improvements in distribution (marketing of products, in addition to improvements in physical means of distribution) are necessary. The results of ex-post evaluation also recommended the development of comprehensive plans in terms of farmland management by small farmers. Furthermore, in terms of appropriate maintenance and management of agricultural infrastructure, similar projects in the past have taught that the

strengthening of resident organizations and the participation of beneficiaries from the planning stage are crucial.

Based on these lessons learned, JICA covers the cultivation of commercial crops such as fruits and palm oil as well as subsistence crops like rice and corn. In addition, the project has been developed as a comprehensive support plan that combines necessary agricultural infrastructure and support to farmers in consideration of types of core crops and cultivation areas in covered regions. The project plan has been developed with consideration of appropriate maintenance and management systems as well as participation in the process by farmers and local residents.

### ● Palestinian Authority, The Project for the Improvement of Solid Waste Management in the West Bank (Grant Aid)

In the evaluation of the Project for the Improvement of Waste Disposal Equipment (Grant Aid) in Palestine, procurement with due heed to the availability of spare parts proved effective in the continuous utilization of equipment. In addition, according to the results of ex-post evaluations of projects in this sector (Vietnam, The Project for Supply of Equipment for Waste Management in Hanoi City (Grant Aid), it is necessary to provide assistance in accordance with the capacity and situation of waste management administration. It is also effective for local governments that have achieved an expected level of waste collection and transportation services to establish relay facilities for waste transportation to enhance the efficiency of transportation to final disposal sites.

Based on these lessons learned, JICA pays due heed to the availability of spare parts. Some equipment is procured from a third country to avoid any difficulties of maintenance and part replacement due to the absence of local agents for Japanese companies. JICA builds a relay facility in the Jericho Joint Councils deemed to have a certain level of collection capacity and transportation services. However, the facility is designed to be extended as a recycling facility in view of plans to consolidate the transportation to a final disposal site in Lamallah supported by Germany’s KfW.

## ○ Providing Information for Improving Feedback System

As described above, for more steady utilization of evaluation information and the results of analysis in project sites, it is important to strengthen feedback systems and mechanisms in project sites as well as the project executing department within JICA.

In order to further strengthen information sharing between the evaluation and project implementation departments, a meeting on project evaluation was newly introduced at JICA in 2010. The

meeting in principle is held twice a year to share information and exchange opinions on operations evaluation among related departments.

JICA is also striving to promote the utilization of evaluation results by organizing meetings on thematic evaluations as well as improving access to evaluation information, including lessons learned.

## Approach 3: Strengthening Accountability

### ○ Publication of evaluation information

To improve information accessibility and strengthen its accountability to the people, JICA set up the “Project Evaluation

Search Database” on its website in 2010. The development of the database has made evaluation information more accessible to people interested in JICA’s operations and evaluation results. In

\*2 3R: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

addition, this search function has enabled the smooth feedback of evaluation information to those who are engaged in project design and planning, implementation and management, and evaluation and monitoring.

In FY2011, a search function for ex-post evaluation reports in English was also introduced on JICA's website. This search function has made evaluation information more accessible for executing agencies not only in countries in which the projects were implemented but also in other countries.

In July 2010, JICA established the Advisory Committee on Evaluation, comprising external expert evaluators, in line with the discussions of "ODA Review" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The Advisory Committee has met six times so far, with its members providing recommendations for the improvement of operations evaluation and the evaluation system as well as useful advice on the strengthening of accountability to the public. See p. 12 for outlines and members of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation.

## Efforts to Improve the Planning Stage

Based on some efforts for the improvement of operations evaluation so far, JICA attempts to improve its operations and enhance development effect through the application of evaluation results. In particular, JICA is redoubling efforts to improve the planning stage of projects by identifying development issues to be solved and establishing appropriate indicators.

At the 5th meeting, the Advisory Committee on Evaluation provided the advice that "the past discussions focused on how to conduct operations evaluation in terms of ensuring accountability. However, it is important to improve JICA's operations by applying evaluation results."

In order to conduct evaluations contributory to the enhancement of development effects, it is important to demonstrate the impact of projects objectively by measurable indicators and reliable data, and a logic model by causal relationship to achieve the project goal. In particular, the quantification and measurement in numerical terms of project goals by establishing appropriate indicators are necessary for effective monitoring of project implementation and ex-post evaluation at the time of project planning.

From the results of ex-post evaluations conducted in FY2011, some factors that influenced development effect at various levels are extracted by cross-sector analysis. This cross-sector analysis suggested that measures to be taken at the project planning stage were particularly important in efforts to enhance development effects (see pp. 14-15).

### ○ Development of "Examples of Standard Indicators" in Accordance with Development Issues

To demonstrate the outcome of Grant Aid projects implemented by JICA in developing countries objectively and quantitatively, JICA has realigned examples of standard indicators by development issues for six representative sectors<sup>\*3</sup>.

It is expected that these examples of standard indicators will be used as a reference in establishing indicators for quantitative impacts at the project formation and ex-ante evaluation stages. Respective examples are categorized based on the development issues<sup>\*4</sup> and realigned in a manner where each indicator is linked to each development issue. The coverage of the examples is to be expanded in future.

The setting of indicators is premised on the establishment of each project goals in light of the situation and an analysis of development issues of an aid recipient country. Thus, it is necessary to adequately establish appropriate indicators consistent with project goals in accordance with individual and specific circumstances.

Regarding the application of evaluation results, "the JICA Evaluation Handbook for Basic Education Cooperation," was prepared by the Human Development Department, one of JICA's project executing departments. The Handbook is designed to enhance the overall quality of projects by showing measures to improve issues at the respective stages of project formation, planning and evaluation in the basic education sector.

In addition to the basic concept of program formation, the Handbook focuses on the three priority areas of "school construction," "training of teachers" and "improvement of school management". These are all core elements of basic education programs, and present specific improvement measures regarding the logical model (causal relationship) from the implementation of support to achieve its outcomes, standard indicators to be established, evaluation methods and ways to present the results of analysis.

The Handbook is a practical guide for JICA staffs as well as experts for reference in their projects formation, establishment of indicators and conducting evaluations.

### ○ Development of Objective and Quantitative Indicators

In Technical Cooperation Projects aimed to improve problem-solving capacity and ownership in developing countries, JICA conducts baseline studies to establish objective and qualitative indicators at the project planning stage or in the initial stage after the launch of projects.

While the number of projects of which baseline studies are conducted has increased in recent years, it was not necessarily clear how the results of baseline studies were leading to the improvement of indicators.

Thus, in order to promote the effective implementation of baseline studies, JICA conducted a thematic evaluation "Baseline study analysis for Technical Cooperation Projects" in FY2012 (see pp. 44-45).

The analysis found that baseline studies were conducted in about 90% of a total of 90 selected Technical Cooperation Projects. The analysis also showed that the implementation of baseline studies had contributed to the revision of indicators.

The results of analysis also suggested that what are important in revising indicators are the clarification of "who (what) will change in what way through the project" at the planning stage, and the "establishment of verifiable indicators in the initial stage of projects and monitoring the project in accordance with these indicators" as the basis of results-based management. Based on the results, it is expected that baseline studies and revisions of indicators will be conducted to improve the project planning stage.

<sup>\*3</sup> Basic education, health, water supply, rural water supply/groundwater, transport (road, bridge, land transportation, airport, port), irrigation/agricultural engineering.

<sup>\*4</sup> The relationships of "goals and means" are shown in a tree structure by breaking down each development issue into "strategic development goal" > "intermediate goal" > "intermediate sub-goal" to understand the whole picture of development issues in respective developing countries.

# Toward Improving Project Evaluation Advisory Committee on Evaluation

JICA established the Advisory Committee on Evaluation in July 2010 in order to enhance the quality of evaluations, strengthen feedback of the evaluation results, and better ensure evaluation accountability.

The Committee, chaired by Shinji Asanuma, Visiting Professor at the School of International and Public Policy, Hitotsubashi University, includes experts in international cooperation and evaluation from international organizations, academia, NGOs, media, and private sector groups.

Outlines of the expert advice provided by the Committee members during the 5th and 6th meetings convened in FY2012 are as below. The wide range of advice promotes the further improvement of JICA's operations evaluations.

## List of Committee Members

(as of January 2013)

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Chairperson                     |  |
| <b>Shinji Asanuma</b>           | Visiting Professor, School of International and Public Policy, Hitotsubashi University                                       |
| Acting Chairperson              |  |
| <b>Akifumi Kuchiki</b>          | Professor, College of Bioresource Sciences, Nihon University   |
| Members (in alphabetical order) |  |
| <b>Hisashi Takanashi</b>        | Managing Director, Engineering and Consulting Firms Association, Japan (ECFA)  |
| <b>Kenichiro Yokoo</b>          | Director, International Cooperation Bureau, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)  |
| <b>Kiyoshi Yamaya</b>           | Professor, Doshisha University Graduate School of Policy and Management  |
| <b>Kunihiko Hirabayashi</b>     | Director, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) Tokyo Office   |
| <b>Masachi Nosaka</b>           | Vice Chairman of Editorial Board, The Yomiuri Shimbun  |
| <b>Toyokazu Nakata</b>          | Chairperson, ShaplaNeer=Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support / Director, Institute of Participatory Development |
| <b>Yasuyuki Sawada</b>          | Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics, Graduate School of Economics, The University of Tokyo                             |
| <b>Yoshiko Homma</b>            | Lawyer (Yoshiko Homma Law Office) / Professor, The Graduate School of Law, Soka University                                   |

## ● From the 5th Meeting

### (1) Status of JICA's previous efforts concerning operations evaluation

- Following the development of the New JICA Guidelines for Project Evaluation and the completion of methodological establishment and manual preparation on evaluation, JICA should implement the guidelines and improve the quality of actual evaluations.
- It is very important for JICA overseas offices to get proactively involved in internal evaluations. As they actually implement projects, have a variety of information and develop close relationships with their counterparts, their involvement is deemed to enable them to implement effective operations evaluations.
- JICA should further strengthen cooperation with project executing departments to create a virtuous cycle of feeding back advantages and disadvantages of projects and points to be considered.

### (2) Utilization of evaluation results by project executing departments

- The Committee regards the JICA Evaluation Handbook for Basic Education Cooperation<sup>\*2</sup> to have a high degree of academic completeness. The Committee expects JICA to find common denominators in order to enhance the versatility of the Handbook for other sectors.
- The utilization of the Handbook enables JICA staff and experts to be aware of the perspectives gained through feedback in launching new projects.
- To connect Technical Cooperation Projects and the concept of a results-based approach, Results-Based Management is deemed effective in sharing the outcome of projects among all parties involved, and in moving toward their common goals.

## ● From the 6th Meeting

### (1) Efforts to improve the project planning stage<sup>\*3</sup>

- Examples of standard indicators in Grant Aid projects indicate the flow from the identification of goals among development issues and selection of optimal means, to achieve goals to the preparation of programs and the formulation and implementation of projects. Within the basic policy framework of goals and means, it is very useful to reconsider how to logically respond to development issues.
- It is necessary to improve the guidance for the establishment of indicators and methods to obtain quantitative data. When JICA considers conducting a bottleneck analysis, counterparts of the project should be involved in the analysis process to strengthen their organizations' capacity to ensure the sustainability of projects.

### (2) Overview of the results of thematic evaluation and ex-post evaluation

- It may be difficult for some developing countries to prepare necessary measures for post-project review at the planning stage. However, it is important that recipient countries make sustaining project outcomes part of their own policies. JICA should study the development policies of respective countries and strategically select targeted countries.
- A more detailed analysis of relevance is necessary. Efficiency should also be considered in terms of economy. The Five DAC Criteria used in ex-post evaluations should be regarded as structurally linked, not as individual and independent.
- Conducting baseline studies is important in the project formation stage. JICA should be flexible in the reviewing and revision of project plans with counterparts within one month of the launch of projects.

\*1 The minutes of the Committee's meetings are posted on the JICA website (URL: [http://www.jica.go.jp/english/our\\_work/evaluation/advisory/index.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/evaluation/advisory/index.html)).

\*2 The JICA Evaluation Handbook for Basic Education Cooperation is described on p. 11.

\*3 These efforts are described on p. 11.