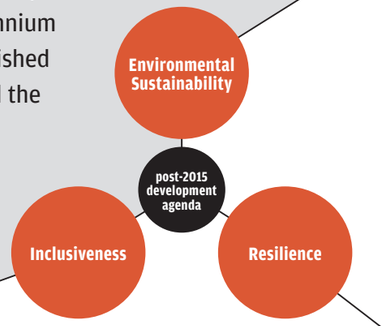
Engineering a Successful Transition to
Post-2015 Development

Ongoing discussions in the international community toward establishing new post-2015 development agenda goals involve accelerating the progress of Millennium Development Goals that have yet to be achieved and considering the unfinished business of the current MDGs. As part of this process, JICA has emphasized the integration of the three elements of "inclusiveness," "resilience," and "environmental sustainability" in new goals and targets for after 2015.



Inclusiveness
Universal Health Coverage in Thailand

Up to now, health-related MDGs have targeted specific health issues and diseases, such as improving maternal and child health and combating HIV/AIDS. As discussion shifts toward the post-2015 agenda, universal health coverage (UHC) has become a central topic. The goal of UHC is to ensure that all members of society have affordable access to a broad spectrum of health services when they need them. To achieve UHC, which is an important factor in realizing inclusive development, governments must not only look at logistical provisions of a healthcare system, such as building adequate numbers of medical facilities and securing medicine stocks, but fiscal and cost aspects as well.

Since instituting a national health insurance system in 2002, the government of Thailand has been working to maintain the quality of medical services while keeping costs under control. As part of these efforts, Thailand turned to Japan, which achieved UHC in 1961, as a source of know-how for establishing a payment system for medical fees.

With JICA's cooperation, staff from Thailand's National Health Security Office came to Japan in the fall of 2013 and received advice from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare and other related organizations in areas including the practical organization of a medical fee payment system and techniques for coordinating implementation with local government bodies. With the backing of Japan's more than 50 years of UHC experience, the Thai government was able to launch comparative studies on payment mechanisms in October 2013. The goal is now to roll out a payment system on a nationwide basis in the near future.

Staff from Thailand's National Health Security Office during a tour at a hospital in Chiba Prefecture, Japan.

Environmental Sustainability
Creating Sustainable Cities

As urban populations around the world continue to swell, creating sustainable future cities is an increasingly vital part of ensuring environmental sustainability in years to come.

The city of Kitakyushu experienced rapid industrialization from the 1960s, eventually becoming an important center of heavy industry. However, environmental issues that emerged as a result of industrial development, such as water and air pollution and other forms of contamination, impacted civic life.

Over the decades, local environmental conditions were successfully improved through the collective efforts of residents, businesses, and the government. Since the 1980s, the city has been an important partner in the international promotion of environmental protection.

In 1981, Kitakyushu sponsored a series of pollution management seminars in Dalian, China. In the 1990s, the Kitakyushu authorities expanded this cooperation to countries in Southeast Asia.

With support from JICA, Kitakyushu began a project in 2004 in Indonesia's second largest city of Surabaya to help transform raw garbage into fertilizer. The Takakura Composting Method, developed by a Kitakyushu-based business, was introduced over four years to 20,000 households, resulting in a 30% reduction in landfill-bound refuse. Similar efforts to reduce solid waste are now being carried out in other Asian cities like Cebu in the Philippines and Bangkok, Thailand.

Continuing their bilateral cooperation, Kitakyushu and Surabaya in 2011 formed a strategic environmental partnership to encourage sustainable development as part of Surabaya's "green city" project. This affiliation was deepened in 2012 when the two municipalities became environmental sister cities.

PHOTO: KENSHIRO IMAMURA

Takakura Composting Method developer Koji Takakura demonstrates the method during a training course for participants from different Southeast Asian countries.

Resilience
Improving Earthquake Resistance in El Salvador

Hard-fought progress toward developmental goals can be lost in an instant when natural disaster strikes. Enhancing a country's resilience against such potential risks is an essential consideration for development efforts.

El Salvador has a long history of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In January and February 2001, violent earthquakes destroyed 164,000 homes, totaling over 11% of the country's residences, causing widespread fatalities from collapsed structures, especially among poorer residents.

December 2003 saw the start of a five-year JICA project in El Salvador to enhance technology for the construction of earthquake-resistant housing for lower-income residents. As part of this project, experiments and research were conducted to increase the earthquake resistance of Salvadoran homes.

One interesting aspect of the project was the involvement of experts from Mexico, a country which itself had been a beneficiary of international cooperation in the area of earthquake-related technology from Japan after a massive temblor in 1985. The South-South efforts between Mexico and El Salvador were facilitated by Japan, thereby forming a triangular cooperation.

To ensure that earthquake-resistant structures become the norm in El Salvador, outdated building standards needed to be brought up to date. To this end, from 2009 to 2012 JICA implemented a project to enhance and disseminate construction technology for quake-resistant housing in the country. In March 2014, the government of El Salvador standardized two new building techniques crafted in the course of this project. The results of this sharing of Japanese experience and knowledge illustrate how the international community is looking to Japan to help bolster resilience all around the world.

A model house under construction displaying new earthquake-resistant building techniques (upper left). A wall is tested to determine its ability to withstand an earthquake.