

# JICA's WORLD

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Feature:

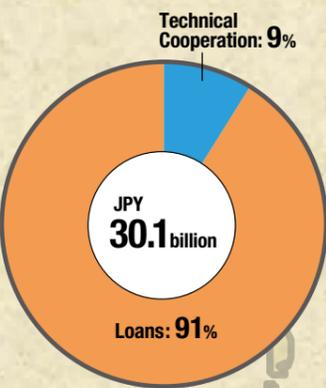
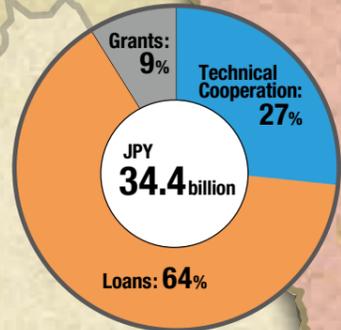
## The Mekong Region



Preparing for the Next  
Stage of Growth

**Myanmar**

Official Name: Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
 Capital: Naypyidaw  
 Currency: Burmese Kyat  
 Population: 51.41 million (Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Sept. 2014)  
 Official Language: Burmese



**Thailand**

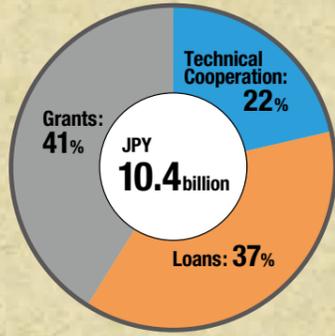
Official Name: Kingdom of Thailand  
 Capital: Bangkok  
 Currency: Thai Baht  
 Population: 65.72 million (Thai census, 2015)  
 Official Language: Thai

**P. 12-13**  
**Co-work for Development of other Nations**



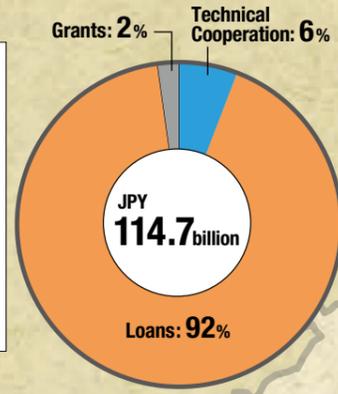
**Laos**

Official Name: Lao People's Democratic Republic  
 Capital: Vientiane  
 Currency: Lao Kip  
 Population: 6.49 million (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2015)  
 Official Language: Lao



**Viet Nam**

Official Name: Socialist Republic of Viet Nam  
 Capital: Hanoi  
 Currency: Vietnamese Dong  
 Population: 93.7 million (General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, 2017)  
 Official Language: Vietnamese



**P. 4-7**  
**Human Resource Development for Industry**

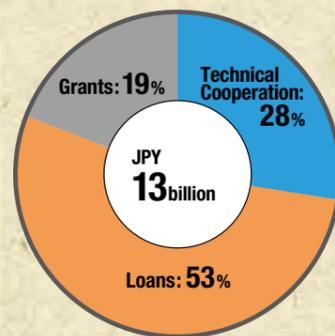
# Feature The Mekong Region Preparing for the Next Stage of Growth

2019 is Mekong-Japan Exchange Year. For many years, Japan has been working together with countries of the Mekong region to enhance development by means of training personnel and improving the region's industrial and socioeconomic foundation. Japan has helped set the basis for significant growth in the region through its efforts to develop economic corridors linking people in the Mekong countries. Matching the need for increased connectivity within the region, we trace Japan's efforts to help overcome the problems faced by each of the countries—from developing business personnel and improving logistics, to coordinating with Thailand, the forerunner in the region, to contribute to development of the other Mekong countries.

**Pie Graphs: Amount of JICA assistance in the Mekong Region (FY2017)**  
 ■ Technical Cooperation ■ Loans ■ Grants \*The figure in the center of the pie graph indicates the total amount.

**Cambodia**

Official Name: Kingdom of Cambodia  
 Capital: Phnom Penh  
 Currency: Cambodian Riel  
 Population: 16.1 million (International Monetary Fund estimate, 2017)  
 Official Language: Khmer



**P. 10-11**  
**Improving Logistics**

Human Resource  
Development for Industry

# Teaching Management Skills that can Transform Laos

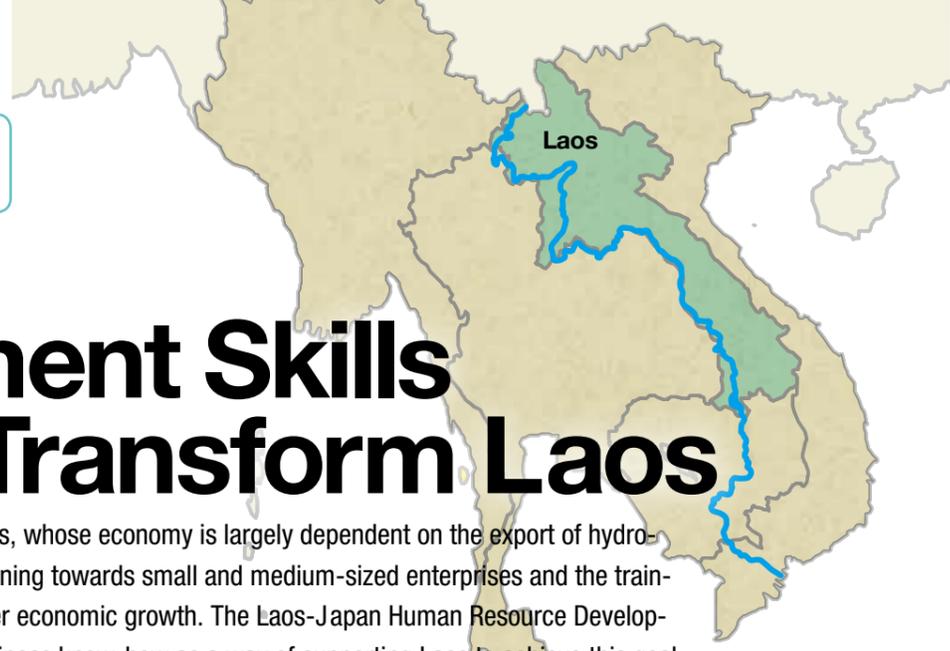
In order to further develop the country, Laos, whose economy is largely dependent on the export of hydro-electric power and natural resources, is turning towards small and medium-sized enterprises and the training of business personnel as a way to foster economic growth. The Laos-Japan Human Resource Development Institute (LJI) provides Japanese business know-how as a way of supporting Laos to achieve this goal.

## Supporting the Market-Oriented Economic Reforms by Training and Developing Business Personnel

In the latter half of the 1980s, Laos started its transition from a planned economy to a market economy. Allowing civilians to freely engage in competition will grow the market economy, but first people need to see themselves as the core of the economy and feel they have the ability to act. Therefore, in 2001, in order to foster personnel who

support the market economy, JICA established the Laos-Japan Human Resource Development Institute\*1 (LJI). As a pioneer in the training and development of Laotian business personnel, the institute continues to produce many exemplary graduates to this day.

The LJI has a wide variety of courses ranging in length from short-term intensive courses lasting for several days, to courses that last up to two years. Among these are the Practical Business Course, which teaches Japanese-style management theory and



We make products for the Japanese market, too.

**Ms. Sifrong Thavixay**  
MBA Course, Batch 5 / Management School, Batch 1

“Around the time I was working in sales for a print shop, I was asked by a client to print some shirts for promotional use. That was the beginning of the sewing business. When I looked into it, I found that even though there were companies that accepted orders from overseas, there were almost none that accepted orders from within Laos. ‘If no one is going to do it then I’ll do it myself,’ I thought, and set to work making it happen.”



The “J” in the name of our store stands for the first name of my elder brother, and also for Japan, to which we owe so much.

**Ms. Lamai Keosavang**  
MBA Course, Batch 4

“I studied management at a university in Japan so that I could help the family business, but after I actually started working I quickly realized that I didn’t know enough and so enrolled in the MBA course. The experience I gleaned as a part-time worker in Japan in terms of employee management also comes in handy. It’s unusual to find private businesses in Laos following the standard practices, such as working in shifts and issuing pay slips, that we have implemented.”

**Ms. Keosavang after Graduation**



At Jmart, the Japanese 5S methodology is implemented in order to improve the workplace environment.



A workplace managed by a leader. New workers at Jmart are always surprised at the way in which work is carried out.

practice, and the Management School, a course where Japanese lecturers experienced in manufacturing in Japan teach management strategy and marketing. Thus far, over 17,000 students have received training.

## Applying Acquired Knowledge to Create a Thriving Business

Sifrong Thavixay, who has attended about 30 business courses, says, “Although theory and knowledge are important, the thing I found most useful has been various approaches to problem solving found throughout the curriculum.” She is currently engaged in a number of businesses, including a sewing business and a café, all of which are very different from her university major of political science. She maintains that the knowledge she now has, about management and production control, was mostly gained through the LJI. “The approach of breaking down problems—which at a glance seem impossible to solve—into smaller problems and finding solutions to those problems was something that was new to me. Students were always impressed by the fact that the teachers had vast practical experience. Whenever we’d ask them something, they would always have a specific answer, and provide appropriate advice based on their own experience.”

## Ms. Thavixay after Graduation

Ms. Thavixay won this trophy in a business plan contest sponsored by the LJI. She was awarded the top prize for her plan for a new apparel brand aimed at the Lao market.



Sewing is based on the division of labor. “Find areas of waste in the process and increase production efficiency.”

Ms. Thavixay is now planning to start up a garbage collection service. In Laos, many entrepreneurs struggle to secure funding because they do not know how to do things like draw up a business plan. Ms. Thavixay has no such problem, and her new venture is proceeding smoothly as she puts the knowledge she acquired at the Management School into practice. She says that what prompted her venturing into a new field of business



The cost of the MBA course is about JPY 360,000. Although this is by no means cheap by Lao standards, where the average annual income is around JPY 90,000, participants are very enthusiastic and consider course fees as an investment in their future.



The MBA course textbooks prepared by Japanese specialists



## Laos-Japan Human Resource Development Institute (LJI)

The LJI is located on the lush grounds of the National University of Laos. In addition to training business personnel, the institute actively encourages Japanese language education and promotes cultural exchange.

"When I used the concept of line production and collected each page of output documents into piles, my supervisor was very surprised, and my colleagues adopted the same method. If you deal with situations well, even with the smallest of things, it can influence your colleagues and improve the overall efficiency of the system."

### Student Comments /



#### Ms. Vanhnasone Noupabphavongsy

Works at the Laos Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and enrolled in the MBA course on the advice of a friend.



#### Mr. Khamphanh Keosomphanh

Manager of the Personnel Department at a power company.

"I decided to take the MBA course since it would enable me to acquire a master's degree in business management, and the idea of learning Japanese-style management appealed to me. The day after I learned about *kaizen*, I reorganized all the documents around my desk. Now my work environment is pleasant, and it is easier to decide what needs to be done first."



On May 24, 2019, in cooperation with the UN's International Labor Organization, the LJI held an Entrepreneurship Day for learning how to create a business plan.

On Entrepreneurship Day, graduates of the MBA course set up booths at the venue and showcased products made by their own companies.

totally unrelated to sewing is also thanks to the LJI.

"In group discussions, as we considered the various business proposals fellow students had created, I came to realize that there are many business possibilities in Laos. One of the reasons that I attend so many courses is to glean new knowledge from my peers. Submitting business problems and new ideas as topics to be discussed by everyone provides me with solutions I would never have considered. It also lets me see any blind spots. Rather than debating, it is more like consulting," says Ms. Thavixay with a smile. She has learned a thing or two already.

There are also graduates who are using the knowledge gained from their MBA course to streamline management operations. Ms. Lamai Keosavang, who works in their family business, Jmart supermarket, tells of the challenges she faced upon joining the store. "Previously, there was no inventory management detailing what was purchased from where for what price, and how many were left and where they were stored, so running out of products and having an excess was a daily occurrence. Everything was like that. No

thought was given to objectively looking at the state of management or making improvements."

Ms. Keosavang struggled to break free from a management style that had remained unchanged for years. One area in which she achieved a major success was personnel management. "My mother was an old-school manager. She told employees what to do in great detail. The trouble with that is you don't have enough time left to do the things that are important to do as a manager. I started by talking with employees and taught them the Japanese concept of *kaizen*\*2 in order to help them become aware that they too are stakeholders. Now I can leave the day-to-day running of the store to the person in charge," she narrates. Giving employees the freedom to use their discretion increased their motivation. Sales performance is steadily improving, and in the near future she plans to open another store.

### The Growing Ties Between Laos and Japan

The LJI also links trained Lao business personnel with Japanese businesses. More than 140 Japanese companies have already entered into Laos. Mr.

Bounlouane Douangneune, the director of the institute, says, "The number of Japanese companies visiting the institute in recent years has been increasing, so I think we can expect increased investment in the country." Even now, the institute offers a range of services, such as providing information about the state of infrastructure and security, as well as identifying Lao companies that could potentially partner with Japanese companies. They can also help in the search for qualified personnel fluent in Japanese. Mr. Douangneune says that more emphasis will be placed on such efforts, and that they will continue to support the creation of networks between Japanese and Lao companies.

The average age of the population in Laos is 22 years. The heightened desire for growth of these young people is driving the development of the nation. Speaking of the future, Mr. Douangneune says, "The transition to a market economy is progressing, and in the last 10 years the number of students aiming to become entrepreneurs has increased by approximately 10 percent. Consequently, expectations for the institute

will be heightened, so we plan to grow in such a way that we will be able to meet them."

\*1 The Laos-Japan Human Resource Development Center was established in 2001. It was incorporated into the National University of Laos as the Laos-Japan Human Resource Development Institute in 2010.

\*2 Characterized by the ongoing review of processes in the workplace and the formulation of solutions emanating from the workers.



#### Mr. Bounlouane Douangneune Laos-Japan Institute Director

Graduated from university in Australia in 1998. Joined the Laos Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and became involved in regional development projects supported by Japan. Began studying in Japan at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in 2000 and earned a PhD degree in International Development Studies. Has been working at LJI since 2005.

Young high school or university graduates can study at Esuhai's Kaizen Yoshida School.



**Human Resource Development for Industry**

# People to Connect Viet Nam and Japan

In 2013, Vietnam's Esuhai Co., Ltd. established a school for teaching Japanese language and business practices to young people who want to work in Japan. Over the years, the school has trained many people who have become real assets in deepening the relationship between Vietnam and Japan through business activities.

The Kaizen Yoshida School building in Ho Chi Minh City. It has seven floors above ground and one below ground, and can accommodate approximately 2,000 students.



## Fostering Promising Youth to be Highly Valued by Japanese Companies

Japan has a technical intern training program for foreign nationals, in which Japanese companies accept young people from developing countries over a period of three years. Participants then put the practical skills and knowledge gained during the program toward the economic development of their home countries upon their return from Japan.

Ho Chi Minh City-based Esuhai runs a school where young people who want to participate in the program are taught the Japanese language and culture, and business customs and etiquette for approximately one year prior to departing for Japan. General Director Mr. Le Long Son proudly tells us, "Our students can greet people properly and are a positive influence in the workplace. They know 5S (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain) and Ho-Ren-So (report, contact, and consult) well, and the companies that accept them are very happy with them."

## Technical School Completed with the Support of JICA is a Dream Come True

Mr. Son hoped Vietnam's infrastructure, services,



Students learn Japanese customs, manners and rules, including ways of bowing.



Graduates from the school work at approximately 600 Japanese companies. Bright, industrious young people are warmly welcomed by Japanese.

**Feature The Mekong Region**  
Preparing for the Next Stage of Growth



Mr. Son also teaches classes. He emphasizes the importance of learning, saying, "People learn about the real world up until the age of 30. The more they learn, the greater impact it has on their life and future."

**Mr. Le Long Son**  
General Director, Esuhai

Came to Japan in 1995 after graduating from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology. In 2000, he gained a master's degree in Mechanical Engineering at Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology. In addition to the personnel training business, he manages a consulting company that links Japanese companies with Vietnam.



Yoshida School. As the number of students increased, the school had to relocate; eventually with the help of financing\* from JICA, which was introduced by Mr. Yoshida, the current school building was completed in September 2013, realizing a long-held dream for Mr. Son.

At present, 12 satellite schools have been established within educational institutions such as universities and vocational schools throughout Vietnam, at which approximately 4,500 students are being educated. In addition to the ordinary classes, high-level courses are offered for those seeking to become engineers and managers so they can improve their skills to a level sufficient to work in Japan.

"Thanks to the JICA's support, our activities received considerable attention both within Vietnam and in Japan. Now we line up jobs for students returning from Japan, and provide support for Japanese companies considering expansion into Vietnam, including referrals of suitable personnel for their needs."

Among the school's graduates are people who have already returned from Japan and are working as managers or entrepreneurs. Mr. Son's vision of raising outstanding personnel and sending them to Japan is promoting interaction between personnel in Japan and Vietnam, and has resulted in the creation of an environment that is conducive to the development of both countries.

\* Private-Sector Investment Finance (PSIF) is a scheme to support private enterprises that conduct business with positive impacts in certain fields, including infrastructure improvement, poverty reduction, and measures against climate change, through the provision of loans and equity. Esuhai receives JICA finance through the Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank (ACB).

and industry would develop like that of Japan, and he thought creating opportunities for young Vietnamese to go to Japan was a good way to help his country reach this goal. While recognizing the potential of the technical intern training program, he thought that at that time the people of Vietnam struggled to adapt to living and working in Japan.

"Although they were already in Japan, their Japanese was insufficient, and they had low awareness for learning new skills. Neither had they adapted to Japanese society, nor been good at dealing with other people. Some even left midway through their programs. I thought that it would be such a waste if I just let things go on as they were."

In 2002, Mr. Son opened a school for learning about Japan in Ho Chi Minh City. Initially there were about 20 students, but the school's good reputation soon spread and by 2005 that number had increased to 200. In 2008, Mr. Masaaki Yoshida (founder of M&A broker RECOF Corp. and Executive Chairman of the Japan-Vietnam Economic Forum), who appreciated the business and provided support in the form of scholarships, etc., was welcomed as honorary chairman and the name of the school was changed to Kaizen

Improving Logistics

# Customs Modernization Leads to Trade Facilitation

If developing countries can facilitate trade, then their economies will grow and their people will prosper. Critical to maximizing the potential for trade is modern customs services to expedite the flow of people and goods and prevent smuggling.

It is standard practice for countries, including Japan, to have customs services to facilitate trade, ensure a safe and secure society, and collect duties and taxes appropriately and fairly. When seeking to expand the economy of an entire region, as is being done in the Mekong region, it is necessary to stimulate intra-regional trade; however, people and goods will not flow smoothly if the Customs administrations of the countries in the region differ greatly in structure, system, or capacity.

JICA works with Japan Customs to help build staff capacity and improve systems of Customs services in each country of the Mekong region

according to their needs. To accelerate this process, Japan Customs personnel are dispatched to the Customs administrations of beneficiary countries in the region for technical assistance to facilitate the free and safe movement of people and goods.

### Facilitating Trade and Enforcing Laws

Risk management is an important part of customs modernization. If the same amount of effort is exerted for inspecting each and every item for customs clearance, then people will line up at the airport, trucks will line up at the border, and the flow of goods will slow to a crawl. At the same time, Customs must stop

## After Myanmar Customs

Before



After



Now we can quickly process thousands of customs declarations.

The Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System (MACCS) streamlined procedures and did away with the long lines of people and the mountains of documents at the customs office.

## Cambodian Customs



Enforcement at the country's borders is an important mission of Customs administrations. Cambodian Customs detected tobacco being smuggled at sea using the customs boat donated by Japan (lower photo).

## Workshop in Thailand

Mr. Fukuzono (left) uses his experience at Japan Customs to improve risk management at Thai Customs.



### Three Missions of Customs (in Japan)

#### 1 Ensuring a Safe and Secure Society

Customs prevents terrorism and smuggling of illegal drugs and weapons.

#### 2 Appropriate Collection of Taxes

Japan Customs collects about JPY 7.9 trillion worth of duties and consumption tax, which represents 13 percent of Japan's tax revenue. In some countries, the tax collected by customs accounts for nearly 50 percent of total tax revenue, making it a major source of revenue.

#### 3 Trade Facilitation

Fast and efficient clearance reduces costs and promotes trade, which makes things easier for businesses engaged in trade and contributes to economic growth.

goods that are likely to be smuggled to evade tax (illicit drugs, weapons, terrorism-related materials, counterfeit goods, etc.). To make things more difficult, the volume of goods handled by Customs is increasing year by year, while the number of customs officers remains limited.

In order to carry out Customs procedures efficiently in such circumstances, Custom's inspection must focus on high-risk items and process low-risk items as quickly as possible. Mr. Fukuzono Akihiko, who was dispatched by JICA to enhance such a system at Thai Customs, comments: "Import-export volumes are expected to increase in Thailand as development proceeds on the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), and on logistics infrastructure like the Laem Chabang Port. Thai Customs is not allowed to increase personnel to deal with this, thus a higher level of implementation of risk management is required. The challenges that they face are introducing more efficient risk assessment procedures, improving intelligence analysis, capacity and applying the risk management approach in a structured and systematic manner." Enhancement of risk management capability has become a common

issue for the Mekong countries to achieve both trade facilitation and law enforcement as trade volumes increase.

### Introduction of Japanese Automated Cargo Clearance Systems

In Vietnam and Myanmar, JICA has supported the introduction of automated cargo clearance systems based on the Nippon Automated Cargo and Port Consolidated System (NACCS) of Japan. JICA also provided comprehensive support to help these countries restructure their Customs clearance processes and build the capacity of personnel to use the new systems. Vietnam adopted the system in 2014 and now uses it to process 99 percent of its import and export declarations. Myanmar introduced the system in 2016 in Yangon and Thilawa, and has been implementing it since 2018 in Myawaddy, located near the Thai border of the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC). Both Vietnam and Myanmar have introduced computerized systems for their Risk Management departments, and JICA is currently helping to train personnel to operate them more effectively.

Co-work for Development  
of Other Nations

# Working Together to Contribute to Other Nations' Development

For many years Thailand has received support from international organizations and from developed countries like Japan. Thailand has achieved growth faster than the other Mekong countries, and now JICA is supporting Thailand's efforts to assist other developing countries as part of the international community.

## Thailand and Japan – Supporting Developing Countries Together

Since the 1980s, Thailand has actively used aid and private investment from foreign countries, including Japan, to enhance its development. Thailand now has a broad base of supporting industries in the automobile, electrical, and electronics sectors that produce essential parts and materials, encompassing the entire process of assembly, sale, and export. People's income has increased, and Thailand became a middle-income country in 2011. In 2017, its gross national income (GNI) per capita was USD 5,950 (World Bank).

Thailand's recent economic development has allowed it to become an emerging donor that supports developing countries. This type of support, where a developing country that has achieved rapid progress in a certain area supports another developing country, is called "South-South cooperation."

Thailand has three characteristics allowing it to effectively provide support: firstly, it has knowledge from having received support in the past; secondly, it has experience from having grown from a low-income to a middle-income country; and thirdly, it has many geographical and cultural similarities to nations in the



Mekong region. Given Thailand's similarity to these developing countries, JICA expects that such cooperation between Thailand and Japan for other countries will be beneficial to Japan, Thailand, and the countries receiving support, and is playing an important role in bolstering this development cooperation.

In 1994, Japan and Thailand initiated the Japan-Thailand Partnership Program, and Thailand, which receives funds and technology from JICA, runs the Third Country Training Program (TCTP), under which from neighboring developing countries Thailand invites trainees to participate in technical cooperation.

Mr. Panuwat Triyangkulsri, Inspector-General of the Thai Ministry of Industry, elaborates on the significance of running triangular cooperation and TCTP with JICA.

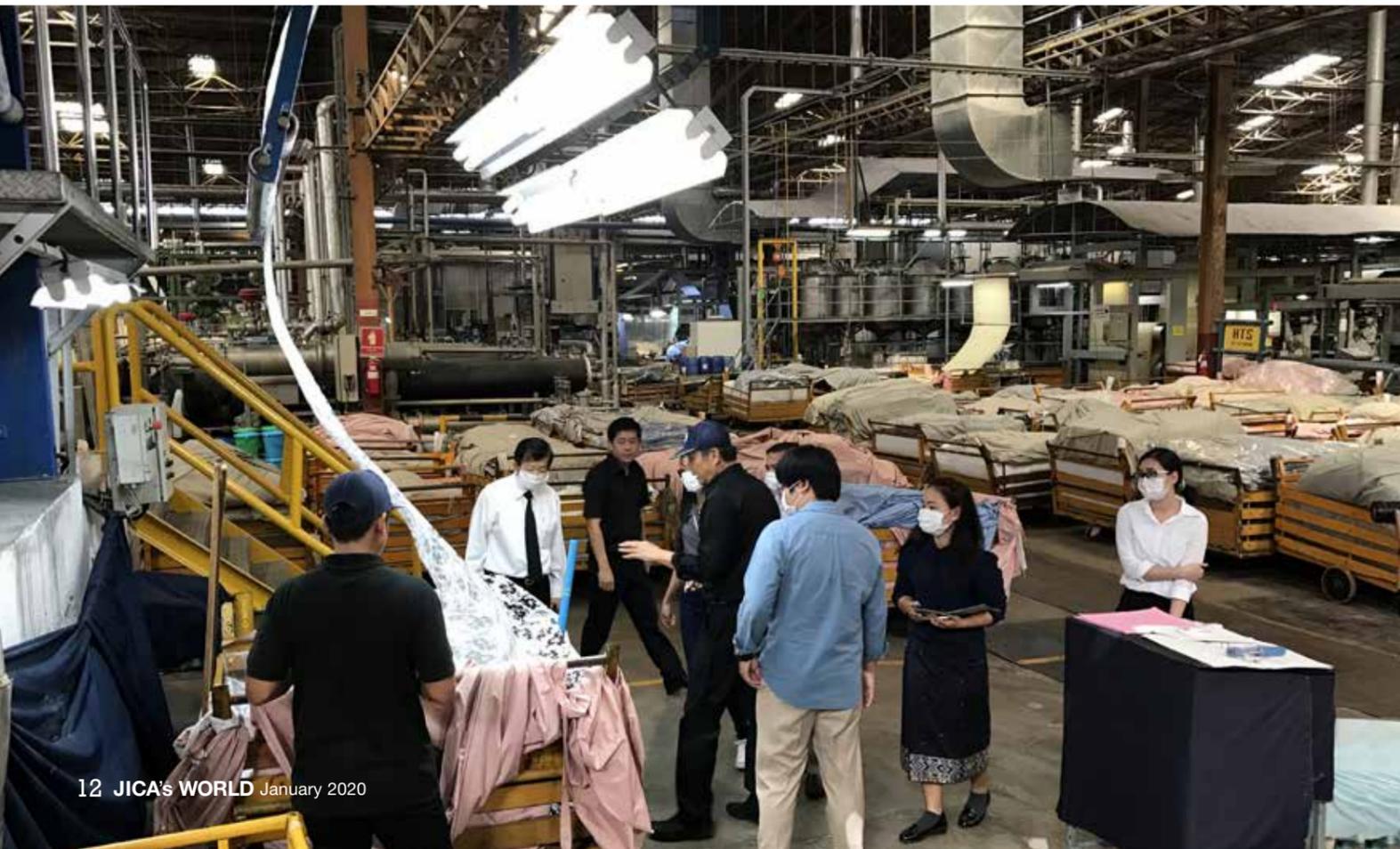
"The biggest thing is peace of mind. Thailand has enjoyed support from JICA and the Japanese private sector for many years now, and Japanese technology is firmly established here. So it's extremely reassuring that Japan is working with us to provide support. And it isn't just us—the country being supported feels reassured too."

## Training People to Develop the Region

In recent years, more Japanese companies doing

business in Thailand are adopting the "Thailand-Plus-One" strategy, in which part of the manufacturing process is shifted to a different Asian country to reduce production costs. In response, JICA and the Thai Ministry of Industry are accelerating the pace of developing supporting industries to attract investors to the Mekong region. Since 2015, through the TCTP course "Materials Processing Technology for Mekong Countries," Thailand has been training leaders of governments and private sector organizations from the other countries in a range of technologies such as machinery, plastics, electronic controllers, fiber dyeing, and welding.

Each time a training course is completed, Thai representatives are sent to the various countries to monitor progress in the adoption of technology in the country, and to study whether the course materials presented in Thailand were appropriate for that country. "To teach something to others is challenging and requires a lot of patience. In spite of this, Japan has pursued human resource development very seriously. We will learn from this and improve our performance," says Mr. Triyangkulsri. Many people at the Thai Ministry of Industry are already familiar with JICA's approach to assistance. Moreover, Thailand understands the effectiveness of the approach, and is adopting it to stimulate new growth in the Mekong region.



Trainees learn about clothes manufacturing at a factory in Bangkok as part of the dyeing course.



Twenty trainees from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam participated



Trainees learn about textile processing and printing at the testing center of a Thai fiber research center.

**Panuwat Triyangkulsri**  
Inspector-General, Thai Ministry of Industry

After study in Japan, Mr. Triyangkulsri entered the Thai Ministry of Industry in 1989. He has since worked to develop Thailand while receiving Japanese support, and is now working with JICA to promote the TCTP. "Thailand has a declining birth rate and an aging population. In response, we want to develop supporting industries in the Mekong countries, and see new industries adopting automation and utilizing robots in Thailand. We wish to build win-win relationships that will foster growth for the whole region."

# Notice on the passing of Mrs. Ogata Sadako, former president of JICA

It is our sad duty to inform you that Mrs. Ogata Sadako, former president of JICA passed away on October 22, 2019. On the wishes of the deceased's family, a funeral service was held for close relatives. A gathering to honor the deceased is planned in Japan for a later date.



## Deceased: Ogata Sadako

Date of birth: September 16, 1927  
Date of passing: October 22, 2019  
(92 years old)  
Funeral: Already held with close relatives.

### Posts:

- Honorary Advisor to the President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (April 2018-)
- Distinguished Fellow, Japan International Cooperation Agency (October 2014 - March 2018)
- Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (April 2012 - March 2016)
- Special Advisor to the President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (April 2012 - September 2014)
- President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (October 2003 - March 2012)
- Scholar in Residence Ford Foundation (2001-2003)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1991-2000)
- Dean, Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University (1989-1991)
- Independent Expert of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar (1990)
- Director, Institute of International Relations at Sophia University (1987-1988)
- Professor, Institute of International Relations at Sophia University (1980-1987)
- Representative, United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1982-1985)
- Chairman, Executive Board of UNICEF (1978-1979)
- Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations (1976-1979)
- Associate Professor, Diplomatic History and International Relations, International Christian University (1974-1976)
- Lecturer on International Relations at the International Christian University (1965-1979)



### Message from President Kitaoka Shinichi:

On behalf of the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the people who are committed to international cooperation, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the family of Mrs. Ogata Sadako.

Mrs. Ogata Sadako was a great leader of the UN community and she devoted herself to bring the international community peace and prosperity. As a president of JICA, she incorporated human security in our development cooperation activities, and served as a leader that was both strong and kind, helping drive Japan's efforts in international cooperation for many years. While thinking back on her achievements in days past, it is my hope that she is now resting in peace.

# Trends



## President Kitaoka's visit to Palau Reaffirms Strengthened Relations



Meeting with President Remengesau.

JICA President Kitaoka Shinichi visited the Republic of Palau between 16th and 18th of October, becoming the first JICA president to do so. He commenced his visit by meeting with President Remengesau, and Dr. Kitaoka spoke of the immense importance of Palau, with vast exclusive economic zone, to the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". President Remengesau expressed his appreciation for JICA's cooperation with development of Palau's basic infrastructure and the contributions made by JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers to Palau's development. Both parties confirmed their intent to further deepen cooperation between the two countries.

Dr. Kitaoka visited the construction site of the "Project of Renovation, Expansion and Management of Palau International Airport", being built with JICA cooperation in the form of private sector investment financing. Then he visited the Palau International Coral Reef Center and a primary school on Peleliu Island. At the school he observed a first grade math class taught by a JICA volunteer. The children showed great zeal in working on math drills prepared by the volunteer. The visit confirmed awareness and appreciation by the local community for the on-site collaborative efforts of the JICA volunteers.



## "Disaster Risk Reduction Management Platform (DRRMP)" Established for 7 Southeast African/Indian Ocean Countries



In April 2019, meteorological radar was completed in Mauritius with the support of JICA.

In the summer of 2019, three South-east African countries and four South-west Indian Ocean countries launched a platform that provides a means for sharing information and exchanging ideas on how to tackle issues related to disaster risk reduction. The idea for the project was formed after the intense tropical cyclone Idai hit Southeast Africa in March 2019, a disaster which greatly affected over 3 million people. Sharing the knowledge about disasters will contribute to mitigating the worst outcomes.

JICA has implemented the "Project of Landslide Management" including a radar construction project and other projects related to the climate change and environment in Mauritius over a number

of years. In May 2019, "Project for Enhancing Meteorological Observation, Weather Forecasting and Warning Capabilities" launched in Mauritius, and a more accurate and immediate transmission system for weather information is being prepared. With the launch of the platform, this knowledge will also be widely used in neighboring countries. As representatives of disaster risk reduction organizations from these countries will be involved in the operation of the platform, in conjunction with various development organizations, it is expected to act as an unprecedented hub of the disaster risk reduction organizations of the countries of Southeast Africa and of the Southwest Indian Ocean.

## Voices from the Field

# JICA's Evolving Contribution to the Mekong Region



## Fujii Takao

Project Leader of the Consulting Team for Japan Center

Since 2000, JICA's Japan Center program has supported countries transitioning to market economies, and as of today there are five centers operating in four countries in the Mekong region alone. Over 10 years have passed since the opening of the first Japan Center in the Mekong region, and their reputation as a link to Japan has grown steadily. The Centers offer business courses which are based on the

"Japanese-style management" and tailored to each country's unique needs.

I was appointed Director of the Vietnam-Japan Center in Ho Chi Minh City in 2007, and I have overseen the dispatching of lecturers to the Mekong and Central Asia regions since April 2019. We have reached a time when other organizations can also provide support, and this allows JICA to make a unique contribution.

An idea of starting a Japanese-style Management School, which has now been spread to all the Japan

Centers, was originated by my own experience as an entrepreneur. As "Japanese-style management" changes with the times, we constantly adapt to provide a high-quality curriculum at every Center.

The Mekong countries need to cultivate small and medium enterprises if they are to achieve their industrialization goals. We will continue to work to develop human resources that lead industrialization with a long-term perspective.

# Thailand and Japan Working Together for the Mekong Region

Pattarat Hongtong

Director-General of the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)

The Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) was established in 2004 as a national focal agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand to administer, plan, promote, manage and evaluate the international development cooperation between Thailand and other countries and international organizations. In practice, TICA strategically coordinates and conducts both short-term and long-term international development policies and international assistance, by matching Thailand's expertise and capacities with the needs of partner countries.

Japan, and JICA in particular, has been a long-standing development partner of Thailand by providing Official Development Assistance since the 1950s; which set the foundation for its close relationship with TICA and its role in the region. JICA works as a model, development partner and mentor organization to TICA, helping establish the institutional knowledge and developmental materials required. In 1994, JICA and TICA became co-development partners, providing technical assistance to other countries to make the most of Thailand's potential to expand its 'appropriate technology' and 'best practices' to other developing countries. Since then, both sides have launched the Japan-Thailand Partnership Programme (JTTP) as a framework for the transfer of technical knowledge to promote the integration of the Mekong Region into the ASEAN. Developments of note include jointly conducting the Third Country Training Program (TCTP) in Thailand; and recently, the country-focused trilateral cooperation projects that emphasize capacity building and human resource development.

With differing national interests, working to build policy consensus among the countries of the Mekong Region can be a



challenge for TICA. However, working together with JICA under the "3Cs", or the principles of Cohesion, Coordination, and Complementarity, is helping to bring about integrated policymaking, whereby concerned agencies can support each other and work more effectively. JICA's long experience and success in development cooperation, especially in bolstering project management, monitoring and evaluation, as well as reporting methods, could be very beneficial in bolstering TICA's role as a development partner to other countries. TICA plans to further develop this area of development cooperation and looks forward to continued close

cooperation with JICA to help make this a reality.

TICA and JICA will gear their cooperation to promote ASEAN integration, and push toward the realization of a free and open Indo-Pacific, the Tokyo Strategy 2018 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation, The ACMECS\* Five-Year Master Plan (2019-2023), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It is safe to say that TICA and JICA's joint development cooperation in the Mekong Region is a critical element in being able to attain these regional and global goals. As partner development organizations that serve as a bridge between countries and regions, we look forward to overcoming the challenges and achieving tangible development in the years ahead.

\* the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy

Profile:

Pattarat Hongtong was appointed as the Director-General of the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) in April 2019. She is a diplomat with the extensive overseas experience, which includes missions in Switzerland, Russia, and Japan. She has also held positions in bilateral affairs with European and East Asian countries and in multi-lateral affairs with the ASEAN and the UN. She is a graduate of Sophia University in Japan, and her expertise is in international relations.