

The Beat of 1.8 Billion People

About a quarter of the global population lives in South Asia, an area that is undergoing rapid economic development. This special issue introduces JICA's cooperation in human resources development carried out in South Asia.

Population size gives this region great potential

South Asia, which is currently home to about 1.8 billion people, is a geopolitically important region because of its central location in the Indo-Pacific region that stretches from Asia to the Middle East and Africa.

MURAYAMA Mayumi, a specialist in South Asia and Executive Vice President of Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO), noted, "While growing in importance, this region also faces numerous challenges. In many countries, policies, institutions, and infrastructure development to promote economic growth are still in the developing stage. While the population in poverty may have declined, there are still 176 million people in India living below the international poverty line (US\$1.90 in 2011 purchasing power parity), and implementing measures against poverty remains a major challenge."

Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to this region is approximately 650 billion yen in ODA Loan (greater than for Southeast Asia), around 16 billion yen in Grant Aid, and varies between 22 and 24

billion yen in Technical Cooperation. About 50 percent of ODA is used for infrastructure development.

However, infrastructure development alone is not sufficient to develop economies and industries. "We need human resources to create a foundation for sustained economic and social development and to use the developed infrastructure effectively and stably," MURAYAMA explained. In addition to industry, areas such as the development of laws, public health, peacebuilding, and empowerment of women must also be addressed.

MURAYAMA also noted that recently, the size of a country's population is also considered as a strength: if the people become better off economically, they will create a huge market. Consequently, a lot of foreign companies are weighing up a move into South Asia. This should help improve both income levels as well as the social participation and position of women in each country.

"The populous nations of South Asia have large productive-age populations, and the period of potential for rapid economic growth is forecast to peak between 2045 and 2055. To take advantage of this opportunity, everyone, man or woman, needs to be provided with

adequate education and nurtured to develop their skills."

Developing human resources to play active roles domestically and internationally

Key to the regions' future is achieving the "No one will be left behind" part of the SDGs through human resources development, and thus helping raise each person's standard of living. Consequently, Japan is working with various partners, such as universities, companies, and local authorities to foster local human resources in this region.

MURAYAMA elaborates on the reason Japan is helping develop human resources, with reference to Japan's current status: "To cooperate with developing countries, the first thing is to contribute to the stability and peace of that country or region by assisting that country's nation-building. This allows all people the chance to live better lives. In addition, there are growing expectations for South Asian human resources' ability to invigorate a virtuous cycle with the Japanese economy." JETRO also operates a portal site* that matches foreign nationals who want to work in Japanese middle-scale enterprises, or SMEs considering overseas business expansion, after having studied at a Japanese university or graduate school.

The service provides support for hosting foreign national interns (work experience), and holds overseas job fairs, and intends to put even more emphasis on ensuring the mobility of skilled human resources from overseas.

"In South Asia, which is seeing its education levels rise overall, there is bound to come a time when greater numbers of educated people will play active roles not just in their own countries, but overseas as well," said MURAYAMA. It can be expected the strong ties between Japan and the nations of South Asia will only get stronger.

* A website that forms an entryway when accessing internet search engines or collections of links to various content.

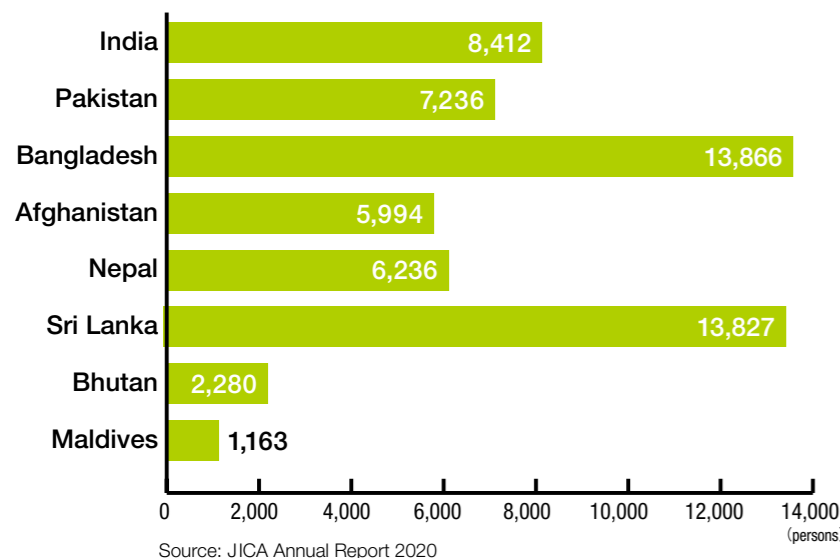
MURAYAMA Mayumi

Executive Vice President, Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO)

Joined IDE in 1984. Areas of specialization: Area studies (South Asia, especially India and Bangladesh), gender and development issues, labor issues, and social development.



JICA Training Participants Hosting Track Record (Cumulative Total for 1954-2019)

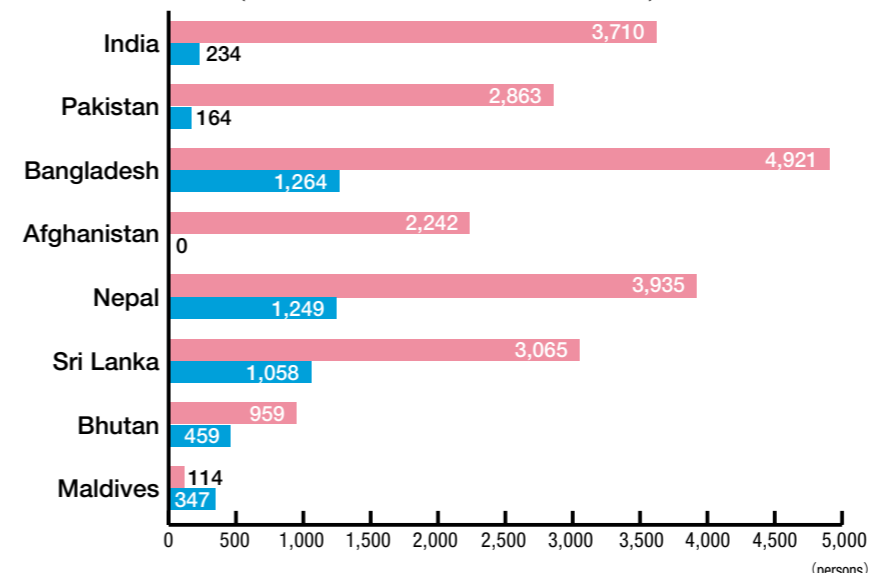


Number of Foreign Nationals/Students from South Asian Countries

Country name	Foreign nationals	
	Total number	Foreign students
India	39,764	1,694
Pakistan	18,296	517
Bangladesh	16,835	3,089
Afghanistan	3,424	147
Nepal	95,367	24,821
Sri Lanka	27,735	5,785
Bhutan	498	248
Maldives	49	3

Sources: Foreign nationals: Total Number of Foreign Nationals by Country or Region of Citizenship and by Status of Residence (Purpose of Residence) (June 2020 survey) (Ministry of Justice statistics)

JICA Experts/Overseas Volunteers Dispatch Track Record (Cumulative Total for 1955~2019)



Number of Japanese Residents/Japanese Companies Operating in South Asian Countries

Country name	Japanese residents	Japanese companies' bases operating in South Asia
India	10,294	5,022
Pakistan	1,016	96
Bangladesh	1,080	315
Afghanistan	—	—
Nepal	1,124	55
Sri Lanka	732	97
Bhutan	137	1
Maldives	123	12

Sources: Japanese residents: Statistics on the Number of Japanese Residents Abroad (October 2019) Number of Japanese companies operating in South Asia: Survey for Statistics on the Number of Japanese Companies Operating in South Asia and Japanese Residents Abroad