Further Promote Field-oriented Approach

Prompt Response to Diversifying Needs

Recognizing that a field-oriented approach is essential when it comes to responding accurately and promptly to the diversifying needs of developing countries, the Japanese government and JICA have promoted a field-oriented approach. Specifically, based on the principle that what overseas offices can do must be delegated to them, field-oriented projects were introduced in fiscal 2002. These are mainly small projects utilizing local human resources, and approximately 50 projects of this nature have been implemented thus far.

On the other hand, some issues were mentioned, because most of their operations, from project formulation to implementation and evaluation, were taken charge of by the headquarters. It was difficult to formulate specific cooperation plans that sufficiently reflected the detailed needs in the field. Quick response to the needs in the field was difficult, and some of the work carried out by the headquarters was duplicated in overseas offices.

The Official Development Assistance Charter (New ODA Charter), which was revised in August 2003, addresses further enhancement of local functions. As exemplified by the establishment of ODA Task Forces within diplomatic missions, the government has further strengthened its overseas functions.
Implementation of JICA Reforms

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) became an independent administrative institution on October 1, 2003, ending nearly 30 years as a special public institution of the government. Taking the opportunity of a new start, JICA has reviewed its programs and organization using the perspective of three pillars: namely, a field-oriented approach; human security*; and effectiveness, efficiency and speed; and will make further reform efforts to implement more effective and efficient international cooperation.

An ODA Task Force consists mainly of Embassy officers and staff of JICA and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)*. JICA experts and staff of government-related organizations, such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and the Japan Fundation (JF), also participate whenever necessary. As of June 2004, ODA Task Forces have been set up in 54 diplomatic missions overseas, and are mainly in charge of the following activities.
1) Understanding and analysis of the development trends of developing countries
2) Conducting policy discussions with the governments of the developing countries at the local level
3) Participation in the formulation and review process of country-specific plans
4) Collaboration with local aid communities

Under the strong leadership of Mrs. Sadako Ogata, who assumed the JICA presidency in October 2003 at the same time as the re-launch of JICA as an independent administrative institution, JICA has accelerated the process of fulfilling the field-oriented approach.

The field-oriented approach under the former JICA system was, as mentioned earlier, based on the principle that what overseas offices can do must be delegated to them. However, in the reform, the nature of the field-oriented approach was thoroughly reviewed based on a new principle that the headquarters supports what the overseas offices cannot do. As a result, JICA has clarified its policy to promote the field-oriented approach by transferring responsibility and authority in the project formulation, implementation, and evaluation to overseas offices, with the aim of strengthening two functions.
One of these functions is project formulation utilizing field staff. Specifically, JICA overseas offices, in collaboration with ODA Task Forces set up within diplomatic missions, take initiatives in the project formulation, speeding up proper project formulation in line with the deliberations of the Task Forces.

The other function is effective and prompt implementation management of projects that have been approved by the government. Specifically, drawing up the project implementation plans under the responsibility and authority of overseas offices enables these projects to reflect the detailed needs in the field. Moreover, project monitoring under the responsibility and authority of the overseas offices and decisions on the details and the timing of input of human resources such as experts dispatched at their discretion allow for project management that responds properly and promptly to the local needs. (Figure a)

Table b summarizes the changes from the present system at each stage, from project formulation to implementation and evaluation. JICA aims to implement effective cooperation promptly by delegating responsibility and authority so that staff near the project sites are able to take initiatives in making decisions and getting involved at each stage of project formulation and management.

Organizational Restructure and Delegation of Authority in Line with Field-oriented Approach

JICA has JICA/JOCV offices and JOCV offices in about 30 countries in addition to 56 overseas offices. However, due to the limited number of staff members and the size of the budgets available, JICA has decided to delegate authority to 30 overseas offices that have been designated as priority promotion offices.

Human resources such as JICA staff and local staff will be increased in these offices so that the field-oriented approach can be carried out smoothly, and at the same time, an office director will be empowered to hire local staff at his discretion. JICA places priority on the development of an IT environment in the office to promote smooth information-sharing that takes advantage of timely technical support from the headquarters. The development of an IT environment will not only allow overseas offices to take the initiative in the selection of consultants and experts, but will also allow for TV conferences, which will obviate the dispatch of study teams and thus lead to more efficient operations.

As far as priority promotion offices are concerned, eight offices (Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Cambodia, China, Bangladesh, Kenya and Senegal) have been selected as pilot offices. Responsibility and authority to project formulation and implementation have been delegated step-by-step in fiscal 2004, and will be followed by a step-by-step delegation of responsibility and authority with respect to project formulation and implementation to the rest of the priority promotion offices starting in fiscal 2005.

Functions of the offices other than priority promotion offices mentioned above will be reinforced through regional support offices. A regional support office is an office that has been established to provide sideline assistance to neighboring countries and areas, and it will provide support, such as assistance for the promotion of common tasks in the region, assistance for project formulation, accounting, and procurement. This will not be carried out in the form of the establishment of a new office, but rather by adding regional assistance functions to the existing overseas offices (Kenya, Senegal, Mexico, Thailand, South Africa, and Fiji have been selected). Thus, in offices other than priority promotion offices, enforcement focusing on the function of project formulation will be carried out with sideline assistance from regional support offices and/or the headquarters.

Activities of regional support offices are scheduled to commence on an experimental basis in fiscal 2004. Then the system will be gradually developed with an increase in staff, leading to full-fledged operation in fiscal 2005 (Figure c).

In order to secure human resources for organizational restructuring based on the field-oriented approach described above, 200 more members, including JICA staff and professionals such as senior advisors*, will additionally be allocated to overseas offices by the end of fiscal 2006. As the first step

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(A figure showing Aims of JICA’s Field-oriented Approach)

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*JICA 2004
toward the reformation, about 130 members will be transferred to overseas offices in fiscal 2004.

**Promotion of Projects Managed by Overseas Offices**

Projects, whose formulation, implementation (selection of personnel, contracts, procurement of equipment), and evaluation are carried out under the responsibility and authority of overseas offices, are projects managed by overseas offices. About 50 projects led by locality (overseas offices) that have been implemented since fiscal 2003 are all relatively small in scale, and transferable tasks of the headquarters have been delegated to overseas offices utilizing local human resources and know-how. Overseas management projects are the ones carried out in such a form that the headquarters provides the overseas office with assistance for the tasks that the overseas office is unable to perform. Thus, it includes large-scale projects such as development studies and technical cooperation projects.

Overseas management projects will be launched on a trial basis at some offices in October 2004, and carried out on a full-scale basis in fiscal 2005. Some of the ongoing locally led projects are listed below.

### 1. Flexible Response by Local Initiative —Laos

The first water conservation campaign in Laos was carried out in March 2004. JICA cooperated in this campaign as part of the Capacity Development of Water Supply System (September 2003 - August 2006).

Cooperation for the water conservation campaign was not originally included in the plan. A development study, Vientiane Water Supply Development Project (March 2003-January 2004), revealed that water consumption per head in this area was two to four times more than it was in Hanoi or Phnom Penh. One of the causes of water shortage in the city was lack of public awareness of the importance of water. With the aim of supplying safe drinking water to 80% of the population in urban areas by 2020, Laos has been making efforts in the extension and reinforcement of water supply and human resources development. The study made it clear that cooperation for water conservation was also essential. By utilizing the merit of locally led projects, JICA has decided to extend cooperation for the water conservation campaign in the human resources development project.

### Table: Changes through Reforms

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<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Formulation</strong></td>
<td>Some projects are formulated under local initiative with the help of local consultants. However, the majority relies on surveys of study teams dispatched by the headquarters.</td>
<td>In cooperation with ODA Task Forces set up within diplomatic missions, overseas offices take the initiative in project formulation. This will enable the formulation of appropriate projects more promptly. In addition to expanding project formulation utilizing local consultants, a system will be introduced so that overseas offices can take the initiative in procuring Japanese staff when necessary.</td>
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<td><strong>Project Plan</strong></td>
<td>Most of the projects are managed by the headquarters. Project plans of individual projects are formulated, decided on, and approved by the headquarters.</td>
<td>Projects are basically managed by the overseas offices (all project plans are formulated by the office, in principle). This will enable the project plans to reflect the local needs more appropriately.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Except for those led by some overseas offices, projects are supervised by the management department of the headquarters. Changes in projects are subject to approval by the headquarters.</td>
<td>Implementation of the overall project commissioned to the overseas office is supervised by the overseas office. Changes in projects of a certain scale can be made at the discretion of the head of the overseas office, which will enable them to respond to changes in local needs more promptly and appropriately.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Relies heavily on the study team consisting mainly of national committees and external experts dispatched from Japan</td>
<td>Implementation of evaluation by the overseas offices and the local personnel will be strengthened, thus enabling the overseas offices to take the initiative in project evaluation. With this, it will be possible to appropriately reflect the results of the project evaluations and discussions upon future project formulation and new project planning.</td>
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<td><strong>Budget Control</strong></td>
<td>Budget control requires approval of the headquarters and thus mobility and flexibility are not sufficient.</td>
<td>Through the expansion of the power over budget control of the office director, it will be possible to implement projects that respond promptly and appropriately to local needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Staff Management</strong></td>
<td>Headquarters assesses the number and details of recruitment.</td>
<td>Certain frameworks (upper limit of the cost) will be presented. Employment of staff (number, job title, type of employment) can be decided at the discretion of the head of the overseas office within the stated limit.</td>
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2. Development Study by Local Initiative as Well—China

The Study on the Sustainable Utilization of Underground Water in Turpan Basin in Xinjiang started in China in April 2004. This is the first locally led development study. It was first proposed by the JICA China Office, and the office actively took part in the selection of consultants in Japan through JICA-Net*. The office has been involved in other overseas management projects: two development studies and one technical cooperation project (Plan for Training Center of Forest Ecology).

Locally led project formulation and implementation require the staff to be able to analyze the information, knowledge, and issues of which they are in charge. To that end, the China office has been working on the development of the system since August 2000. It allocated staff according to individual issues in April 2001, organized basic information according to individual issues in October 2002, and compiled cooperation policies in April 2003. It has also implemented an overseas basic study to collect information on issues, and to formulate program and projects since October 2001. Each responsible staff member has been working on an overseas basic study or field study since fiscal 2003. It is expected that this local initiative will help projects get launched faster and implement cooperation of high quality that corresponds to the local situations.

An interview survey from farmers in the Sustainable Agricultural Training and Extension Project in Rural Areas, Panama
3. Local Staff Responsible for a Project—Panama

The JICA Panama Office has been working on systematic reform for over a year so that local staff can assume direct responsibility for projects. For example, the locally led Project for the Sustainable Agricultural Training and Extension Project in Rural Areas (January 2004 - January 2007) has been undertaken by two personnel, a local staff member and a Japanese project formulation advisor*. These two responsible persons visit the project site quite often and manage the project in direct consultation with related persons.

Panama has many mountains and the proportion of small-scale farmers is high. Therefore, the aim of this project is to improve technical dissemination efforts applicable to farmers in impoverished areas. The office has realized that technologies accumulated and improved by experts and wisdom in the field are both necessary in order to facilitate technology transfer* from farmer to farmer. This was the basis of the decision to launch the project by local initiative. The two personnel in charge take a long trip to the intermediate and mountainous areas about 250km southwest of the capital of Panama, and earnestly listen to farmers. It has been pointed out that a locally led project saves time and allows appropriate response at the right time to promptly respond to local needs.

4. Activities Led by Local Staff—Indonesia

The JICA Indonesia Office has divided the department by projects into four groups, and assigned a local female staff member to lead one of the groups. She is the assistant general officer (team leader) of the third group, which is in charge of community development, projects in cooperation with NGOs, training in Japan and third-country training*, and a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)*. The group includes four local staff members and one Japanese project formulation advisor in charge of PRSP. The position of team leader for group one and group two is assumed by the deputy director of the office, and she stands in an equivalent position.

She says, “I think it is not sufficient to have a system where only Japanese staff assume responsibilities in order to meet the expectations of the Indonesian people. Equipment that is never used may be provided and unsustainable projects might be carried out due to misunderstanding, mismatch of aid and needs, and lack of ownership*. The role of local staff is important, especially in a country like Indonesia, which is in political, economic, and cultural transition.”

5. Establishment of Task Force in the Field—Bangladesh

With the aim of strengthening local roles in the process of policy decision-making, ODA Task Forces were set up throughout the world in 2003. The effort in Bangladesh is the model for such task forces. The Bangladesh Model launched in 2001 is a cooperative system that spans the organization. Repeated discussions among the Embassy, JICA, and JBIC took place in Bangladesh to select the five highest priority sectors and five priority sectors, and aid in the form of human resources and funds were input intensively into these sectors. Working groups were formed by sector to formulate Sector Programs*, participate in donor meetings, hold study meetings, and transmit and share information.