Chapter 5  Oceania

Oceania

Pillars of Aid

Human Resources Development and Environmental Conservation
Required for Sustainable Development of Small Island Countries

Cooperation results by country (FY 2003)

- Vanuatu 249,620
- Marshall Islands 203,021
- Kiribati 105,604
- Solomon Islands 79,969
- Tuvalu 28,471
- Cook Islands 12,863
- United States Miscellaneous 5,202
- Nauru 4,177
- Niue 3,125
- New Zealand 2,630

Papua New Guinea 1,088,822

Total 4,603,907

(Unit: thousands per year)

On the whole, the countries of Oceania are island countries with small national territories, populations, and economies. The amount of human resources to support socioeconomic development is small, and the outflow of human resources overseas is also a problem. Since each national territory consists of a large number of islands, access to domestic and international markets is difficult, as is access to high quality social services such as health and medical care and education. The economic structure depends mainly on primary industry and aid from former suzerain states, and is easily affected by outside forces.

The priority issue in Oceania is to develop societies that are independent from the former suzerain states. Developing human resources and building socioeconomic infrastructure* are important for self-reliant administrative and social services, as well as for economic growth. In addition, in order to pursue sustainable development* for these goals, emphasis is placed on proper resource development and environmental conservation.

In the area of human resources development, volunteers are dispatched mainly in the sectors of primary and secondary education, vocational training, and health and medical care; and many administrative officials are accepted as training participants. Distance learning using information technologies (IT) is employed in providing cooperation in higher education. In the area of health and medical care, we promote cooperation that addresses infectious diseases such as polio, malaria, tuberculosis, and filariasis.

With respect to the development of socioeconomic infrastructure, such as roads, harbors, airports, and power and water supply, in association with financial assistance for the construction of facilities, technical cooperation for the maintenance and operation of those facilities is extended.

Environmental problems represented by coral reef destruction and solid waste disposal have become serious. Region-wide cooperation crossing national borders is promoted to address environmental conservation, which is a global issue*, as a common issue in Oceania.

JICA is also working closely with other aid organizations and international organizations acting in the region of Oceania to provide cooperation. These include a waste disposal project in cooperation with the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), which is a regional international organization, and an infectious diseases project in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO).
Current State of Development

**Societies and Economies Reliant on Former Suzerain States**

The individual island countries of Oceania have small national territories, populations, and economies on the whole. The main feature of their economic structure is a strong dependency on primary industries. This structure is fragile and easily upset by weather conditions and fluctuations in international prices. Many problems remain to be tackled if these countries are to achieve any degree of economic autonomy. These problems are related to the fact that the countries themselves often consist of large numbers of islands, their domestic markets are small, they are far from international markets, and transportation and communication links to compensate for these disadvantages are inadequate.

Relations between these countries and their former suzerain states are generally close, but in recent years, growth in bilateral aid* and multilateral aid* to developing countries in Oceania has remained stagnant. Following achievement of independence from the US, the three countries of Micronesia (Palau, Micronesia, and Marshall Islands) have been receiving financial aid in the form of “compact money” based on the Compact of Free Association with the US. However, financial aid has recently started shifting to project-type aid.

Against this backdrop, establishing societies and economies that are no longer reliant on aid is an urgent issue for the small island countries in this region. There are many issues that affect Oceania as whole: waste control; environmental problems, including climatic change and rising sea levels; human resources development; and the development of inter-island transportation and communication. It is therefore essential to adopt a comprehensive approach to the region. Every country in the region places emphasis on the reduction of public sectors, promotion of private investment leading to development in the main industries of agriculture, fishery, tourism, and promotion of regional cooperation which jointly addresses common issues.

In May 2003, the Third Japan-Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), known as the Pacific-Islands Summit, was held in Okinawa with the participation of leaders and ministers from 15 countries and regions, all members of PIF excluding Nauru. At the summit, the Okinawa Initiative: Regional Development Strategy for a More Prosperous and Safer Pacific was adopted, setting priority policy targets in security, environment, education, health, and economic growth, and clarifying joint action plans for Japan and PIF members. These issues should be addressed on medium- and long-term bases in the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. JICA implements cooperation that fully reflects the results of the summit.

Addressing Priority Issues in JICA Programs

**Two Priority Issues in Common**

Every country in Oceania differs in respect of its national and economic size, ethnic composition, population, availability of natural resources, traditional social foundations, way of life, and the capacity of government to formulate and administer development plans. Finely tailored aid in line with the specific development needs and development levels of each country is therefore required. However, since all these countries gained their independence relatively recently and are dependent on primary industries, human resources development is the most important. In addition, it is important to provide support that enables these countries to overcome the limiting factors that distinguish island countries (i.e., isolation, small size, and vulnerability).

There are two priority issues that affect virtually all the countries in this region, the first of which is support for social and economic self-reliance, and the second is environmental conservation and the proper management of resources for sustainable development. Efforts are needed to identify and formulate effective cooperation projects that will bring benefits to the region as a whole. At the same time, it is necessary to work closely with other donors* that possess knowledge of island countries and international organizations active in the region.

**Support for Social and Economic Self-reliance**

With regards to support for social and economic self-reliance, human resources development for nation-building must be combined effectively with improvements in infrastructure for the development of basic industries.

Cooperation for human resources development is being provided in the areas of basic education and vocational training through the dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) and the acceptance of technical training participants with a view to creating a body of qualified people to work in economic management, development planning and other leading industrial fields. Grant aid is provided to support higher education, specifically improvements and expansion at the National University of Samoa, in combination with technical cooperation linked to grant aid projects.

From the standpoint of upgrading the bases for key industrial development, in addition to infrastructure improvement in response to the needs of island countries, cooperation is taking
place with emphasis on fishery, marine transportation, and marine resource development in connection with aquaculture.

- **Environmental Conservation and Proper Management of Resources**

  In terms of environmental conservation and proper management of resources to enable sustainable development, JICA aims cooperation directly at environmental conservation measures, such as conservation of coral reefs and waste management, to deal with such issues as the destruction of seashore ecosystems, the indiscriminate catching of certain types of fish, the felling of tropical forests, and improper handling of wastes. One example of cooperation in this area is the Palau International Coral Reef Center (cooperation based on a Japan-US Common Agenda*). The center, constructed with Japanese grant aid, is expected to become an international base for coral reef conservation and research, and diverse technical cooperation activities are under way.

- **Cooperation Beneficial Region-wide**

  In Oceania, coordinated and collaborative cooperation with other aid agencies and international organizations take place. An example of cooperation that has benefited the region as a whole is a project for distance learning and strengthened information technology based on the establishment of the University of the South Pacific (USP), which is a base for higher education for the 12 countries and areas in Oceania, as well as network facilities for distance learning that makes use of satellite communication for neighboring countries (a project in collaboration with New Zealand and Australia).

  Other examples of cooperation conducted through international organizations active in the region include grant aid to the educational and training center of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme’s (SPREP) headquarters and region-wide technical cooperation for the proper management of wastes.

  As a partner in the Pacific Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (Pac ELF), which is implemented by WHO, since 2000 JICA has provided medicine and examination kits and has dispatched JOCVs under a five-year plan.

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**Front Line**

**Samoa**

**Enhancement of Information and Communication Technologies at the National University of Samoa**

**Develop Human Resources for Information and Communications Technologies on an Island Country**

**Dispatch of Expert**

**IT indispensable for a small island country**

Though people living in the Samoa islands in the South Pacific share only one language and culture, the islands are divided into two countries, East and West. Eastern Samoa belongs to the US and Western Samoa is an independent country called Samoa. From the close of World War I to the island's independence in 1962, Western Samoa was a mandatory of New Zealand. Therefore the official languages are English and Samoan. The education system is patterned after England’s. In the lower grades of primary school lessons are given in Samoan, and from the third grade they start using English and the number of lessons in English gradually increases. The South Pacific Secondary Education Uniform Examination that students take when graduating from high school is all in English.

The people in Samoa are basically diligent about education and now the entire nation is tackling the enhancement of education for information and communication technologies (ICT). That is because it is extremely important for the people of Oceania, a region with widely scattered islands, to communicate through radio and TV broadcasts and data communication using the Internet.

**Enhance information-related education curriculum**

Though language barriers sometimes become a problem for the expansion of ICT, the standard language used in the IT field is English and it is smoothly promoted in Samoa without any localization of software.

In a country like Samoa with high temperatures and humidity, ICT using TV and computers are more appropriate than communications by paper. In fact, in Apia, the capital of Samoa, there are only two bookstores, whereas there are seven Internet cafes, and we can tell that the Internet is spreading to more and more people.

Given that the demand for information and communication will continue to increase, development of human resources for ICT is urgently required. The Samoan government has declared an Information Technology Strategic Plan, aiming to train at least 500 technicians by 2007. For this, the National University of Samoa and the Samoa Polytechnic, for which Japan has provided cooperation for many years, will play a central role. Further cooperation from Japan is expected for improvements in the information system of the university and enhancement of the curriculum related to information.

(JICA Samoa Office)

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