Field based management, human security, and effectiveness, efficiency and speed.

These are the three pillars under which the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has pushed forward reforms with respect to the nature of projects and organizations since its re-launch as an independent administrative institution in October 2003.

In fiscal 2004, JICA enhanced overseas fields by shifting many personnel there as the first phase of the reforms. In fiscal 2005, the second year of the reforms, we will strengthen the domestic implementation system as the second phase. This feature reports on the second phase of JICA reform plans in detail by following the progress of its reforms.
1 Practicing Field Based Management

Prompt Response to Local Needs ~ The Great Sumatra Earthquake and Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster ~

Emergency Relief

Dispatch of the Japan Disaster Relief Team on the Largest-ever Scale

The Great Sumatra Earthquake and Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster, which occurred on December 26, 2004, claimed the lives of more than 170,000 people (as of March 30, 2005). The Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) team that was dispatched from Japan to the disaster area was the largest scale relief operation in its history.

The conditions of victims depend on the type of the disaster. In this case, infectious diseases caused by poor sanitation was feared, as well as traumatic injuries directly caused by the tsunami. Furthermore, damage from the tsunami was so extensive that local hospitals were assumed to be paralyzed, and thus it was determined that early dispatch of medical teams was necessary.

Besides the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, 13 JDR teams consisting of 248 members were sent to four countries. Approximately 6,700 patients were treated by the medical teams. The Sri Lanka medical team departed Japan on December 27, the Thailand rescue team and the Maldives medical teams on December 29, and the Thailand and Indonesia medical teams on December 30. Most of the first round of teams were dispatched within four days of the disaster. The Sri Lanka medical team, in particular, departed Narita Airport 23 hours after the tsunami hit the Sri Lanka coast, becoming the first foreign relief team to arrive at Colombo Airport.

Moreover, for two or three days following the disaster, in parallel with the dispatch of relief teams, emergency relief supplies such as tents and blankets were sequentially air-transported to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Thailand from JICA’s warehouse in Singapore. Japanese Embassy staff and JICA staff were waiting at the airports to receive the supplies and worked to have these items distributed to the affected areas without delay.

JICA Offices Responding to Local Needs

The high quality of the emergency relief during this disaster was not confined to the speed of the dispatch of teams. JICA offices in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Maldives, which know their respective areas well, performed outstandingly. In preparation for the team’s arrival, the JICA Sri Lanka Office rapidly supported the activities of various relief teams, such as rescue teams, helicopter teams, medical teams, forensic experts’ teams, and search specialists’ teams. In Indonesia, in response to the need for adequate safety measures*1 in the affected areas, the JICA office provided total support by sending JICA staff to each team to counter security concerns.

On the scene of relief activities, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) who know the areas well supported each team by working as interpreters in the local language in Thailand. In Indonesia, ex-participants*2 secured houses and vehicles within the devastated town for the use of the relief teams. For the medical team in Aceh, an ex-participant volunteered to interpret in the Aceh language. He devoted himself to support the team’s medical activities despite the fact that his relatives were affected by the disaster and had to face the suffering of his native people more directly since he understood the language.

The medical activities of the relief team were not completed in two weeks of the emergency period. Aceh Province in Indonesia was the most devastated area and the medical unit of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces stayed there more than one month following the third dispatch of a medical team, providing dedicated medical services.

Furthermore, what has to be noted about...
the medical activities is that a team was dispatched to conduct a survey of the outbreak of infectious diseases and psychological stress, which affect the people in the aftermath, one month after the disaster. This survey was conducted by the JDR team as part of their activities. The results of the survey were passed on to JICA’s rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance, leading to projects in the affected areas and the acceptance of training participants in Japan.

1. Adequate safety measures: since around 1998, there have been repeated conflicts between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which is seeking for independence from Indonesia, and Indonesia’s government troops and police security forces.

2. Ex-participants: those who have participated in JICA’s training in Japan

Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Assistance

On January 25, 2005, while relief activities of the JDR team were still underway in some countries, JICA dispatched a project formulation study team to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Thailand to conduct a needs study on rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance and identify projects that needed immediate response.

Indonesia

In the most devastated country, Indonesia, the JDR team, which consisted of medical teams and Self-Defense Forces, conducted medical, transportation, and disease prevention activities. However, even after the most critical time had passed, the disaster left deep scars and continuous support was necessary in the areas of roads and bridges, water and sewage, education, medical care, and community reconstruction. In particular, the damage in Banda Aceh City of Aceh Province was so catastrophic that nearly half of the city was gone. Many city officers lost their lives and it was difficult to formulate rehabilitation and reconstruction plans.

Under these circumstances, JICA discussed measures for reconstruction assistance with concerned parties of the Indonesian government and Banda Aceh City in Aceh Province which was showing some signs of recovery, and decided to carry out an emergency development study*4. Not limited to the formulation of reconstruction plans, aid activities, for example, aid for the resumption of fishery and anti-trauma measures, were implemented in cooperation with local NGOs, which directly support the community (residents), and destroyed human-waste treatment plants was repaired to prevent infectious diseases caused by poor sanitary conditions. These efforts were a combination of study and on-hand activities. JICA will provide support for the restoration of cadaster necessary for urban rehabilitation plans, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) training, and JICA’s other projects that are underway in Indonesia.

The Aohi Field Office*5 was set up in cooperation between the JICA Indonesia Office and the Japanese Embassy in Indonesia to collect and coordinate information on local needs.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka had emphasized balanced development among regions and races*6 toward the consolidation of peace before the tsunami disaster occurred. From this perspective, support for the reconstruction from the tsunami disaster is provided to all the affected areas, including the region controlled by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), in the form of non-project grand aid*4 and rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance in collaboration with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Based on the results of the project formulation study conducted in January, various activities are underway through the emergency development study; for example, formulation of regional rehabilitation and reconstruction plans for the tsunami-affected areas, support for the community organizations, support for the independence of fishermen, and reconstruction support for the urban area. In addition, in order to alleviate stress, tension, fear, and fatigue of the affected people, JICA dispatched 19 former JOCVs with experience working in Sri Lanka on a short-term basis. The JOCVs patrolled the affected areas including evacuation shelters in groups and offered recreation and counseling activities (see p. 48). A study to plan reconstruction of 14 damaged primary and secondary schools was also conducted.

Moreover, an agreement was made between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to set up mechanisms for coordinating relief operations for the tsunami damage, and thus an unprecedented disaster might promote the peace process.

Maldives

The impact of the tsunami was minimized on Male Island, where the capital is located, thanks to breakwaters constructed with Japanese grant aid in the past. However, public infrastructure such as ports, schools and medical care facilities on more than 25% of the inhabited islands was damaged and many fishing boats were destroyed. While the government of Japan has provided non-project grant aid, JICA has conducted an emergency development study to support the formulation of short-term rehabilitation plans and mid-term reconstruction and development plans as well as demonstration projects based on community participation with the aim of creating job opportunities for residents, providing disaster prevention education, and recording tsunami disasters.

Thailand

The government of Thailand announced a policy of rehabilitation and reconstruction with self-help efforts, and established a committee to examine measures for the reconstruction of the environment and living conditions in cooperation with donors. JICA sent experts to the taskforce under the committee to understand the situation and collect information in preparation for the formulation of cooperation plans. JICA then co-hosted a workshop with

Building a fishing boat in cooperation with a local NGO that conducts community reconstruction activities (Banda Aceh)

Photo by Katsumi Yoshida

Smiles return to the faces of the people who participated in the craft class planned by a JOCV (Sri Lanka)
Consolidation of a New Field Based Management System

In order to accurately understand aid needs in the field and implement projects properly and promptly, JICA has recently begun promoting various reforms with the focus on the field. As part of these reforms, JICA has substantially delegated authority to project implementation to overseas offices (JICA offices located overseas), immediately after becoming an independent administrative institution. Thus, JICA has been trying to establish a new project implementation framework in which overseas offices take the initiatives in projects while thoroughly matching local needs and aid projects. “Management by overseas office” is a new management style that emerged as one of these measures. From Headquarters Initiative to Overseas Initiative

Traditionally, projects have been managed with headquarters’ initiative, in which the department in charge at the headquarters has authority and responsibility over the implementation of projects (JICA’s individual projects) and overseas offices assumes only part of the project management. In this traditional style, the staff in charge of the project at the headquarters would visit the local site to conduct studies, and the headquarters would basically give directions about the subsequent project policies and management. Advantages of overseas office located close to the project site could not be fully demonstrated, thus creating redundant operations at both ends, requiring considerable amount of time and costs to gather and analyze local needs, and taking too long to make decisions.

Thus, eight offices were selected as pilot offices, which introduced management by overseas office on a trial basis in October 2004. This shift was expanded to 30 out of 56 overseas offices on a full-fledged basis in April 2005. In fiscal 2005, the first year of full-fledged operation, projects for which approximately 30% of total budget for technical cooperation projects of the 30 overseas offices have been allocated will be implemented under the management by overseas office. The ratio will continue to increase after fiscal

JICA Regional Seminar on Tsunami Early Warning Systems

The great earthquake and subsequent tsunami disaster that occurred off the coast of Sumatra and the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004 inflicted unprecedented damage on 12 countries along the coast of the Indian Ocean. In preparation for future possible disasters, the affected countries promptly launched efforts toward the establishment of a tsunami early warning system.

The JICA Regional Seminar on Tsunami Early Warning Systems, which serves to back up those efforts, was held for two weeks, from March 7 to 18, 2005, with the participation of 21 administrative officers in charge of disaster prevention in 11 Indian Ocean coastal countries. When a catastrophic disaster occurs overseas, the first thing that happens is a dispatch of JDR teams. It is now known throughout the world that prompt planning and implementation of training programs of this kind can be effective after a disaster strikes.

A large earthquake hit off Indonesia’s Sumatra coast again on March 29, a week after the participants returned to their home countries. Each country responded immediately and issued a tsunami warning, based on the experience learned from the previous tsunami on December 26. Right after the earthquake, information was actively exchanged among training participants through e-mails. It is still early to say whether or not the tsunami early warning system is infallible, but it is fair to conclude that one of the accomplishments of the training program is the establishment of the network connecting these 11 countries and Japa.

Training participants receiving explanations on the tsunami warning system at the Japan Meteorological Agency

Part 1

JICA host a Regional Seminar on Tsunami Early Warning Systems targeting the tsunami-affected areas and established a basis for regional cooperation through technological transfer regarding forecasting and warning system and the building of networks among those countries.

As described above, JICA continuously implements rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance in the affected countries. As the post-disaster period gets longer, concerns are mounting about the deterioration of sanitation management in temporary housing, lack of mental care, accumulating stress of residents, and withdrawal of volunteers. To solve these problems, JICA will make concerted efforts in implementing mid- and long-term aid for the disaster.

*3 Emergency development study: study to formulate emergency reconstruction plans and implement emergency rehabilitation projects in countries that are affected by large-scale natural disasters or civil conflicts
*4 Field office: a support center set up in the affected site for a fixed period of time, with specific objectives such as peacebuilding and reconstruction assistance
*5 Balanced development among regions and races: due to the conflict between the Sri Lankan government dominant by Sinhalese, the majority of the population, and the LTTE, a Tamil enclave organization seeking separation and independence, the development in northeastern Sri Lanka, the LTTE-controlled area, is lagging behind.
*6 Non-project grant aid: it is called non-project because it provides foreign monetary support to import supplies, instead of implementing projects such as facility construction and disaster relief activities.

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Reference
2006 and the field based management is expected to be consolidated.

Under the management by overseas offices, overseas offices are vested with considerable authority and responsibility over each process of the projects, from project design, allocation of experts, hiring consultants, equipment procurement, project monitoring, to evaluation. It is thus expected that more appropriate and speedy implementation of projects meeting local needs will be made possible.

In order to put this style of project management into practice, it is necessary to comprehensively strengthen the foundation of overseas offices, including the development of information and telecommunications networks connecting overseas offices and headquarters (JICA-WAN), allocation of special staff such as senior advisors, reinforcement of local staff, and recruitment and placement of staff providing backup in accounting and procurement, not to mention the enhancement of the competence of office staff. Furthermore, it is essential to enhance the structure of the headquarters that supports overseas offices. JICA has implemented a comprehensive organizational upgrade, simultaneously with the introduction of the new project management style.

Enhancement of Project Formulation Capacity

Under the initiative of President Sadako Ogata, JICA places as much importance on the enhancement of project formulation capacity (for matching aid needs of developing countries with JICA’s specific projects) as the enhancement of project management capacity in the context of ongoing field based management approach. The above-mentioned efforts toward a new field based management system are believed to have a positive effect on the enhancement of project formulation capacity.

Traditionally, many overseas offices with insufficient organizational structures tended to rely on the headquarters to gather local aid needs, and in many cases appropriate and speedy response was not possible. However, overseas offices, under the new field based management system, would narrow the information gap through close communication with the partner country and stakeholders in the field, and then expand their activities to proactively analyze developing issues with the help of the headquarters. It is expected that this system will allow overseas offices to actively feed back new ideas and knowledge generated from project implementation for opportunities in project formulation such as ODA Task Forces*. JICA is also undergoing internal restructuring so that the will and knowledge of overseas offices can be fully reflected when conducting needs studies to consider a new project, believing that local information in combination with strategy and knowledge of the headquarters will help it progress toward developing more appropriate cooperation.

In reality, there have been positive responses during the pilot period of the overseas initiative since the fall of fiscal 2004; for example, a report from one office states that communication with the partner government has become interactive, enabling appropriate and speedy response, and a message from a concerned party says that project formulation capacity has improved. Some have recognized the improvement in the project management from local people involved in the field, including counterparts. This progress of groundwork toward overseas initiatives in overseas offices has made possible emergency relief activities and the subsequent rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance in the wake of the Great Sumatra Earthquake and Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster.

On the other hand, some negative comments have been made as well. Some said that an imbalance was created between the improvement of office structure and the increased work load, which resulted in fewer opportunities for staff members to visit the project site due to overwork. While promoting the improvement of the structure of overseas offices, JICA intends to further strengthen the capability of the entire organization, including the headquarters and domestic offices, in order to carry out strategically the formulation of projects of higher quality.

Finally, the ODA Charter**, revised in August 2003, addresses the strengthening of local functions in policy-making and implementation, which specifically requires the following:

- Strengthening the function of overseas offices so that they can play a leading role in policy-making and implementation jointly with diplomatic missions and local offices of implementing agencies; and
- Making effort to understand developing countries’ development policies and aid needs comprehensively and accurately, primarily at the local level.

JICA’s efforts introduced in this section would greatly contribute to the strengthening of local functions, and their achievements would not only improve the efficiency and quality of JICA projects, but also increase the overall quality of Japan’s ODA. With this recognition, JICA will commit itself to the promotion of management by overseas office in the future.

* ODA Task Forces: a field ODA working group established in fiscal 2003 as part of the measures for strengthening local functions stipulated in the New ODA Charter, comprising mainly overseas embassy officers in charge of economic cooperation, local office staff of JICA and JBIC, with the participation of JICA experts, overseas offices of JETRO, and the Japan Foundation when necessary

** ODA Charter: basic document of the ODA policies formulated to clarify Japan’s ODA concepts and principles
development, and assistance for conflict-riden areas such as the Balkan region and the Middle East. JICA has also been strengthening the functions of overseas offices to take initiatives in project implementation under the banner of field based management.

Support for Peacebuilding Based on the Local Context

In peacebuilding assistance, quick and effective response is essential to meet the needs of an affected population. These response should be carried out with careful consideration of local context and needs.

Case

Chad

Speedy Development through Teamwork between the Headquarters and Liaison Office

After the summer of 2003 about 200,000 Sudanese fled to eastern Chad as refugees due to the conflict between anti-government armed forces and the Arab militia supported by the government, as well as assaults on residents in the Darfur region in Sudan. Starting in early 2004, the United Nations High Commissioners Office for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations set up more than 10 camps to accommodate refugees. However, the eastern part of Chad is originally half-dry land with meager natural resources, and due to the influx of refugees, numbering several times as many as native residents, the villagers in the area have been faced with a number of problems, including depletion of trees for fuel purposes, lack of drinking water, and price hikes.

To counter this situation, in September 2004 JICA dispatched a project formulation study team to launch a project to support the communities in the vicinity of refugee camps. The project aims to ease tensions between local residents and refugees and promote rural development through the improvement of water supply facilities in villages in line with short- and mid-term needs.

There is no JICA office or Embassy of Japan in Chad; furthermore, the project’s target areas are located 900km from the capital. Nonetheless, based on the concept of field based management which says that projects shall be carried out wherever there are urgent needs, the JICA France Office, which covers Chad, took the initiative in promptly setting up a field office and established the operational ground.

The headquarters dispatched a project formulation study team to intervene in emerging needs of the population living in the vicinity of refugee camps, and the JICA France Office as liaison promptly took over the work to consolidate the environment based on the local context. These prompt actions on the part of both the headquarters and overseas office contributed to the timely and speedy launch of the project activities.

Case

Afghanistan

Utilizing Local Resources for Effective Assistance

Educational support is one of the peacebuilding efforts that JICA undertakes in Afghanistan. In response to a request from the government of Afghanistan, a project for strengthening teacher training is planned with the following objectives: development of teachers’ manuals; improvement of the teaching ability of in-service teachers through short-term training using the teachers’ manuals; and policy formulation to improve the mechanism for capacity building of in-service teachers and pre-service teachers.

JICA is integrated into the aid coordination mechanism* in the area of teacher training in Afghanistan, called Teacher Education Program (TEP). In addition, JICA makes the most of the local human resources and institutions to complement the function of the Ministry of Education. For example, JICA will collaborate with local human resources who have developed textbooks in line with the new curriculum to develop teachers manuals. In order to supplement the system of the Ministry of Education, JICA plans to work with a local NGO with experience in education and teacher training in Afghanistan for implementation and administration of training in local areas.

Sierra Leone

Transitional Assistance from Post-conflict Reconstruction to Development

In Sierra Leone, intermittent civil wars continued from 1991 until a cease-fire agreement was declared in 2001. In preparation for resuming the cooperation, which had been suspended due to conflicts, JICA carried out a project formulation study for peacebuilding and reconstruction assistance in Sierra Leone in August and September 2004, and launched its activities supported by JICA Ghana Office.

JICA established a field office in Freetown, the capital, in January 2005. Following its establishment, a follow-up study team for the Rural Water Supply Project (grant aid) was dispatched at the end of February and a project formulation study team for the Support Project for the Social Reintegration of Children through Education in Kambia Province at the end of March.

The JICA Ghana Office as back office for the Sierra Leone field office, has been actively involved in assistance for Sierra Leone. The office takes the initiative in formulating projects in the areas of agriculture and infrastructure. Integrating the perspective of prevention of recurrence of conflict; projects are being planned, formulated, and implemented under the field based management.

*9 Aid coordination mechanism: a program formulated to take advantage of the strength of both donor countries and agencies, with the objective of maximizing aid effects

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Study of an existing well in a village (Chad)

Children in the target area of the Support Project for the Social Reintegration of Children through Education in Kambia Province (Sierra Leone)