In the Middle East, many countries are wealthy in general, mainly oil-producing countries. On the other hand, they have factors of social instability, for example, overdependence on natural resources, increased unemployment due to population increase, widening income disparities, and restriction on individual freedom. These factors were exposed by the Afghanistan and Iraq issues, leading to the expansion of terrorism as a result. The longstanding Palestinian issue greatly affects the stability of the entire region and the realization of peace in the Middle East is vital to peace and stability not only within the region but also worldwide.

Placing the utmost priority on peacebuilding and reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine as the key to stability of the Middle East, JICA strives to implement timely and effective cooperation. Since the governments and administrative bodies do not always function at the community level in these countries, JICA is promoting assistance that stresses the perspective of human security, including self-governance by residents and improved self-reliance capacity.

In addition, Iraq, Palestine, and the neighboring Arab countries are closely interrelated over a wide range of subjects, from politics and economics to culture and society. Therefore, with focus on collaboration with the neighboring Arab countries, JICA proactively promotes human development projects for Iraq and Palestine in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan.

Meanwhile, there is a wide range of needs in the Middle East, depending on the country’s situation. In the fields of water resource management, industrial promotion, developing technicians, and environmental conservation, all of which are vital needs common to the region, JICA implements cooperation in line with these needs, including the Volunteer Program. Especially in Mediterranean countries, where trade liberalization with EU is in progress, securing industrial competitiveness and solving employment issues are major issues. JICA is therefore making efforts on cooperation for vocational training and technicians training programs to improve technical skills and expand employment for young people in those countries.

In the Middle East, there are some high-income countries, which mostly produce oil, while there are also undeveloped countries, which are mainly non-oil producing countries. There are also diverse ethnicities and cultures comprising a complex social structure. Therefore, detailed cooperation in line with the actual conditions of each country is necessary. It is an unstable region that has seen much conflict since World War II, including four Middle East wars, the Lebanese conflict, the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf Crisis, the Yemen conflict, and the Iraq war. Unstable political conditions continue in Palestine and Iraq. Stability of the Middle East will have a tremendous impact on the international economy as well as worldwide peace and stability. Therefore, support for reconciliations among different ethnic groups, religions, and social classes leading to the regional stability are called for.

In the oil producing countries where finance is relatively adamant, infrastructure such as transportation and information network is developed at a high standard; however, domestic human resources development to strengthen industrial infrastructure is a big task. On the other hand, in relatively low-income countries without the blessings of resources, the priority tasks are to address issues in health and education as well as poverty and the delay in rural development.

In the Middle East, where precipitation is generally limited, securing water resources is an important task not only for livelihood, agriculture, and industrial development but also politically. It is necessary to provide cooperation in a variety of areas such as understanding of the accurate amount of water resources, water management, water resources development in the areas that have available capacity for development, promotion of efficient water usage (use of sewage-treatment water, leak control, etc.), agricultural irrigation, and saving urban water.

Since the terrorist attacks in the US in September 2001, while the international situation has drastically changed, the call for modernization and democratization of the traditional Arab society has grown. At the same time, in response to the progress of globalization, a structural reform in the economy is required. Since support in the Middle East is closely connected to the international situation, it is important to provide cooperation in sectors and fields that will lead to the stability of each country and area while paying attention to such trends. \n
Pillars of Aid Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Assistance for Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine

![Image](image_url)

**Current State of Development**

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Addressing Priority Issues in JICA Programs

Efforts by Country

Palestine—Support for Middle East Peace

With the establishment of a new moderate Abbas administration in January 2005 and Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in September 2005, expectations for Middle East peace accelerated rapidly, and the international community started full-scale aid.

From the perspective of human security, considering support for Palestine to be urgent, JICA launched a development study, the Jericho Regional Development Study Project, in October 2005. In this project, development plans for primary industries such as agriculture and tourism are being formulated as medium- and long-term regional development plans for Jericho and the Jordan Valley for self-sustaining economy. JICA has also implemented technical cooperation projects in three areas, local administration, maternal and child health, and waste control, for three years starting in August 2005, promoting the improvement of livelihood service quality as well as the enhancement of administrative capacity of local governments, including municipalities. In order to facilitate those projects, JICA utilizes the Fast Track System (see p.13), which enables prompt project implementation, and has opened two field offices in the West Bank in an attempt to strengthen support systems.

Afghanistan—Rural Development and Capacity Development for Peace Consolidation

Since Japan and the international community started support for rebuilding Afghanistan in 2002, reconstruction in various areas has progressed. As a part of the political process for the establishment of an official administration (Bonn Process: based on Bonn Agreement concluded in December 2001), the Lower House of the National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections were held in September 2005, following the establishment of a constitution and the national presidential election. As for DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration), which was the biggest concern regarding security improvement, disarmament for

Front Line

Activities of the Former Training Participants Alumni Association

Possibilities Expand through the Network

Support with a focus on human development

Aid sustainability does not mean that provided equipment continues to operate. It means that aid recipients who have acquired productivity improvement skills and management improvement skills using the provided equipment share that know-how with the local community in return.

Because Japanese activities in Palestine were restricted for security and other reasons, cooperation in Palestine was provided in the form of receiving training participants and support for activities of the alumni association of former training participants. The number of people who have received JICA training in Japan or third countries such as Jordan and Egypt has reached almost 1,000 in total. JICA Palestine Office works to build a network of these returned participants, positioning them as aid actors for local community development, and promotes their activities.

Expanding possibilities of alumni association

In fiscal 2005, an environment day was set up and free medical treatment was provided as independent activities of the alumni association. On the environment day, a clean-up campaign of Gaza beach was held and volunteers, including the former participants cleaned the beach. As for free medical treatment, doctors who are executive members of the alumni took initiatives to carry out activities with other volunteers at the refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, JICA commissioned a grant aid project follow-up survey as part of its operations for the alumni association for the first time. It was an original case to utilize an alumni association as JICA’s in-house consultant. Also, in recent years JICA has been making full use of Follow-up Cooperation, which is highly valued because of the prompt implementation of necessary aid as a tool for the local materialization of training outcomes.

The alumni association has its own website (http://www.jalap.org/) to exchange and provide information actively. Currently the alumni association office is located in the Gaza Strip. JICA plans to further vitalize the alumni association activities as well as to build a network of former training participants in the West Bank in fiscal 2006.

(JICA Palestine Office)
approximately 63,000 combatants nationwide was completed by June 2005, and reintegration activities for those discharged combatants are still going on.

In the area of reconstruction, restoration of major trunk roads, reconstruction of approximately 13,000 primary and secondary schools (student enrollment that was approximately one million in 1999 increased to approximately five million in 2005), literacy education, and community development projects targeting approximately 10,000 villages have been implemented.

JICA has implemented cooperation projects worth about ¥9.9 billion in total for the past four years for the reconstruction of Afghanistan in coordination with such aid from the international community. At the emergency reconstruction stage, roads and public facilities including schools in Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazari Sharif were restored. In the education sector, the Strengthening Teacher Education Program, which aims to train approximately 10,000 teachers nationwide to respond to the drastic increase of students enrolled in school, as well as non-formal education, was implemented. In the health sector, taking into account an extremely high maternal death rate and tuberculosis occupying a large portion of the death statistics, medical human resources development was carried out to promote reproductive health and tuberculosis control. Other cooperation includes support for reintegration of ex-combatants discharged by DDR through vocational training, support for the settlement of returnees through community development, and support for women.

Following the completion of the Bonn Process marked by the holding of a national assembly in December 2005, as a new cooperation framework between Afghanistan and the international community, Afghanistan Compact was adopted and the Interim-Afghanistan National Development Strategy, a five-year plan by the Afghan government, was announced at the international conference held in London in January 2006. At the conference, major donor countries and international agencies pledged a total of US$10.5 billion in support of this strategy, including US$450 million of support from the Japanese government, and continuous support for Afghanistan was confirmed.

In order to increase outcomes and sustainability of assistance for priority issues, JICA will provide support in effective combination of different projects, with the focus on comprehensive rural development that will contribute to the promotion of agriculture and the livelihood of residents in rural areas, the improvement of basic health services, development in the education sector, and social infrastructure.

Iraq—Peacebuilding and Postwar Reconstruction

Three years after the fall of the Hussein administration in 2003, attacks by armed forces continue, conflicts between different religious groups show no sign of decline, and tensions still remain in major cities. However, events such as establishment of an Iraq constitution in October 2005 and the implementation of a national election in December 2005 indicate that reconstruction led by the Iraq citizens is about to kick off.

At the International Donors’ Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq held in October 2003, the Japanese government announced grant aid cooperation (US$1.5 billion) and yen loans (US$3.5 billion) as support for Iraq. In view of the consistency with the priority sectors in the Iraq national development strategy, JICA prioritizes support for governance, improvement in social services, development of living infrastructure, and economic development. For more effective implementation of Japan’s financial cooperation, JICA promotes the organizational enhancement of Iraqi-related organizations and development of human resources through training programs in neighboring countries and Japan. In fiscal 2005, a total of approximately 570 Iraqi people were trained (166 were trained in Japan, 212 in Jordan, 146 in Egypt, 33 in Syria, 9 in Malaysia and 1 in Singapore) in a variety of areas such as power, water supply, health, and irrigation. Approximately 1,300 Iraqi people have received training since fiscal 2004. Because these former training participants are expected to become partners in Japan’s support for Iraq, JICA will establish an alumni association for them in support for activities to strengthen the cooperative relationships between Japan and Iraq.

South-South Cooperation

Countries in the Middle East are not only deeply connected politically and culturally but they also share many development issues within the region. Regional cooperation in which countries in the region work to solve problems together is effective for solving these issues, leading to stability for the whole region. Collaboration with Arab countries is critical for the Middle East peace process and support for Iraq as well. JICA conducts many training courses for Iraq and Palestine in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria (third-country training), promoting South-South cooperation as the embodiment of peacebuilding and regional cooperation.
As for South-South cooperation for Africa, JICA’s support is based on the partnership agreements with Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. JICA utilizes the outcomes of Japan’s past cooperation and incorporates the perspective of support for the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) in promoting cooperation reflecting the needs of NEPAD member countries and characteristics of the host country.

**Human Development and Vocational Training**

In many countries in the Middle East, in accordance with the rapid increase in population, unemployment among young potential workers has become a social issue. Amid the advanced trade liberalization and intensified international competition, industry development and expansion of employment require improvements in technical skills of workers.

JICA has actively provided support in relation to human development and vocational training in the Middle East region. As part of Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative, a vocational training workshop was co-hosted by the Jordanian and Japanese governments in Jordan in cooperation with JICA in September 2005. G8 countries and BMENA (Broader Middle East and North Africa) member countries participated in this workshop, shared the current situations and issues regarding employment and vocational training, and agreed that a sustainable system for technical education and vocational training to meet local needs shall be established in cooperation between the public and private sectors as a regional mechanism.

**Water Resources Control and Environmental Conservation**

In the Middle East where most of the land is arid, according to population growth and progress of industrialization, lack of water resources has become a serious issue. Also, recent economic development and rapid urbanization and industrialization have exacerbated environmental problems such as water contamination, solid waste, and air pollution.

JICA is providing cooperation to enhance the technical skills of the human resources that will lead respective sectors; for example, strengthening of environmental monitoring capacity and environmental administration in the environment sector, and water resources information management, leak control, and water management in the water sector.

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**Front Line Syria**

*Project on Efficient Irrigation Development and Extension in Syria*

**Aiming at Effective Use of Water Resources by Extending Techniques and Awareness**

**Enhancing the promotion of water-saving in agriculture**

Water shortages are a serious issue in Syria. In particular, agricultural water accounts for approximately 80% of the national water consumption, and the government has been addressing the issue in various ways. For example, the government announced a large-scale policy to replace all traditional irrigation with modern water-saving forms in five years between 2000 and 2004. However, institution-building and activities for promoting the implementation of the policy were not functional enough and the policy was not achieved.

Meanwhile, JICA has implemented various projects, placing the effective use of water resources as its primary issue for aid to Syria. Promotion of agricultural water-saving conforms to JICA’s aid policy for Syria. In response to a request from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, this technical cooperation project started in 2005. The project aims at the use of appropriate amount of irrigation water at the project sites by training irrigation technicians and enhancing extension activities to farmers.

**Consolidation of water-saving awareness**

Although studies and research regarding water-saving irrigation have been conducted for a long time in Syria, collecting sufficient data for project implementation is not easy owing to the fact that Syria is a developing country. Accordingly, the project began with a baseline study in the first year. At the same time, in order to provide better extending and training activities, past efforts were analyzed. Currently, pilot plans are being tried out at the project sites and technical training for extension workers is being implemented.

The biggest obstacle in the project is that people in Syria are not conscious about water-saving. In addition, water fares are so low that restriction in terms of cost is also hard to impose. Fortunately, a new national policy to promote water-saving irrigated agriculture is being implemented starting in 2006. While coordinating with this institution-building of the Syrian government, the project will further promote water-saving irrigated agriculture by demonstrating to farmers the benefits of water-saving irrigation as well as consolidating water-saving awareness.

(JICA Syria Office)