Chapter 3 Project Evaluation

Evaluation

Assess the relevance and effectiveness of cooperation

Outline of Project Evaluation

Objectives of Project Evaluation

In order to implement effective and efficient cooperation, it is important to implement projects that meet the needs of developing countries. It is also important to evaluate what has been achieved by the projects, and then reflect the lessons and recommendations on improvements in the implementation of new projects. JICA evaluate projects at the ex-ante, mid-term, terminal, and ex-post stages to assess the relevance of a project and cooperation effectiveness as objectively as possible. JICA utilizes the results of evaluation for planning and improving projects and securing accountability, striving to implement more effective and efficient cooperation with the support and understanding of Japanese citizens.

Types of Project Evaluation

JICA’s project evaluation can be categorized based on several perspectives. The classification according to evaluation focus (what to evaluate) and stage within the project cycle (when to evaluate) is as follows.

1. Evaluation Focus

ODA evaluation can be classified into three levels—policy, program and project levels—among which JICA conducts project- and program-level evaluations.

Project-level evaluation covers individual projects and is conducted by the operational department and overseas offices of JICA. It is intended to be used in planning and revising projects, making decisions on whether to continue or adjust cooperation activities, reflecting lessons on similar projects, and securing accountability.

On the other hand, JICA’s program-level evaluation evaluates a set of projects that share overall goals (end outcomes) and/or development issues comprehensively or programs of specified cooperation schemes such as volunteer programs or disaster relief programs in a cross-sectional manner. These evaluations are carried out as thematic evaluations under the supervision of the Office of Evaluation of the Planning and Coordination Department of JICA. These evaluation results are used for improving JICA country programs and thematic guidelines, as well as for identifying and planning new projects.

2. Evaluation within Operating Cycle

Project-level evaluations are classified into four types within operating cycles: ex-ante, mid-term, terminal, and ex-post. Program-level evaluations are conducted as ex-post evaluations.

1) Ex-ante evaluation

The ex-ante evaluation is carried out prior to the implementation of a project to examine its consistency with JICA country programs and necessity. Also it is conducted to clarify the contents and expected outcomes and examine the appropriateness of the project implementation comprehensively. Evaluation indicators of a project made at the ex-ante stage will be used to measure the effects of cooperation from mid-term to ex-post evaluations.

2) Mid-term evaluation

The mid-term evaluation is conducted during implementation of a project for understanding achievement of the project and the implementation process. It is conducted for evaluating the project from perspectives such as relevance and efficiency, which involves reviewing the original plan and strengthening project management if necessary.
Furthermore, it examines the causal relationships between the process and achievements and how it affects the achievements. It then checks and analyzes the implementation process with regards to what is happening in the process toward its achievement and how it affects the achievements. It examines the causal relationships between the project and the outcomes to determine whether or not what is achieved is the result of the implementation of the project.

Methods of Project Evaluation

Project evaluation conducted by JICA is structured with three frameworks: (1) assessing performance; (2) making a value judgment based on the five evaluation criteria; and (3) making recommendations, drawing lessons learned, and feeding them back to the next stage.

1. Assessing Performance of a Project
The evaluation study first examines achievement with regards to what has been achieved in the project and whether the achievements are favorable. It then checks and analyzes the implementation process with regards to what is happening in the process toward its achievement and how it affects the achievements. Furthermore, it examines the causal relationships between the project and the outcomes to determine whether or not what is achieved is the result of the implementation of the project.

2. Value Judgment Based on Five Evaluation Criteria
Next, a value judgment is made based on the results of checking the circumstances and examining the project. JICA has adopted five evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability) for conducting an evaluation, which was proposed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1991.

3. Recommendations, Lessons Learned and Feedback
Lessons learned and recommendations obtained from the results of an evaluation need to be fed back to those involved in the project and have to be used for improving implementation of the evaluated project as well as planning subsequent similar projects. In order to make lessons and recommendations that are easily fed back, it is important to clarify the underlying contributing and inhibiting factors that have affected the projects. It is also important to specify the recipient of the feedback.

### Table 3-12 Perspectives of Five Evaluation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance</th>
<th>Questions whether the plan of the project is appropriate in light of the development policies of the partner country, aid policy of Japan, and the needs of the intended beneficiaries, and whether it is suitable as a solution to issues and problems of the target area and sector.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Questions whether the effects (project purposes) planned in the project are achieved and whether they have been brought about as the results of the activities of the project, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Questions whether there are no alternative measures to achieve the output or the project purpose at lower cost (or whether higher achievement could be realized at the same cost) and whether inputs were timely, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Questions whether the long-term and indirect effects (overall goal) planned in the project are achieved and whether there are any unexpected positive or negative impacts (ripple effects), etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Questions whether the effects (project purpose, overall goal) targeted in the project are sustained after completion of the project.</td>
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Evaluation System

JICA’s current evaluation system is composed of the Evaluation Study Committee, the Advisory Committee on Evaluation, the project implementation departments (headquarters and overseas offices), and the Planning and Coordination Department (Office of Evaluation). The overall policies of JICA’s project evaluation are determined by the Evaluation Study Committee. The committee, which consists of the vice-president in charge of the Planning and Coordination Department as the chair and the directors of relevant departments as members, examines and deliberates on the basic policies of project evaluation and the feedback methods of evaluation results. The Advisory Committee on Evaluation, which consists of external experts (scholars, representatives of NGOs, persons involved with international agencies, etc.) with expertise in development aid and evaluation, offers advice to the Evaluation Study Committee on the evaluation systems and methods and reviews the internal project evaluation results, thus contributing to improvements in the objectivity of the evaluation.

Individual project evaluations are conducted by the project implementation departments and the Office of Evaluation, Planning and Coordination Department. The project implementation departments carry out project-level evaluations and utilize the results for operation and management of the projects. The Office of Evaluation is in charge of planning and coordination in relation to evaluation in general, including improvements in evaluation methods and promotion of feedback of evaluation results.
while supporting and supervising the project implementation departments to perform appropriate project evaluations. It also undertakes program-level evaluations such as thematic evaluation.

Enhancing and Expanding the Evaluation System

JICA has made the following efforts for enhancing and expanding evaluation in order to operate effective and efficient projects, as well as execute accountability.

1. Consistent evaluation from ex-ante to ex-post stages
   
   In order to implement projects effectively and efficiently, JICA reviews project plans and improves management through continuous evaluations at various stages of the project cycle, such as before, during, at the end of, and after the implementation of cooperation. Additionally, in order to achieve better planning and operation of similar projects in the future, the lessons obtained from the evaluation are fed back. To run the evaluation system along the cycle of a project appropriately, JICA has developed various guidelines and provided training to people involved in projects to improve their evaluation capacity.

   Recently, in particular, information about good practices that are successful cases in project improvement utilizing evaluation results has been actively collected and shared within the organization in order to promote feedback of lessons. A study that JICA conducted in fiscal 2005 revealed that, in the course of improving projects, evaluation results are used for various purposes, such as planning and operating individual projects, formulating cooperation policies by sector and issue, improving systems for project implementation. Among these, one example of improving systems for project implementation is the launch of the Fast Track System in which the ordinary implementation processes are simplified and reduced so as to quickly implement projects that require urgent attention. This action was taken based on the results of a thematic evaluation in fiscal 2004, Peace-building Assistance: Review of Assistance to Afghanistan.

2. Evaluation covering various programs
   
   In addition to technical cooperation projects, JICA has various other cooperation schemes, including the Disaster Relief Program and the Volunteer Program. For these programs that differ from technical cooperation projects in many aspects, JICA has developed evaluation methods appropriate to the characteristics of each scheme and has made efforts to introduce systematic evaluations. Furthermore, in order to make evaluation more useful, development and improvement of various evaluation methods have been promoted. For instance, evaluation methods of program approach are being developed in response to the strengthening of program approach that has been promoted recently in JICA, and methods of participatory evaluation are being researched in the midst of a focus on assistance directly reaching people.

3. Securing transparency and objectivity in evaluation
   
   In order to ensure objectivity of evaluation, JICA promotes evaluation by third parties by involving more external experts in evaluation study. On the other hand, project evaluation mainly aimed at management of a project is generally conducted by JICA as internal evaluation. Internal evaluation has merits; for example, evaluation based on actual situations is possible and the evaluation results can be fed back easily to the decision-making process for the future. However, transparency and objectivity may not necessarily be secured when compared to external evaluation.

   In response, we have an Advisory Committee on Evaluation conduct secondary evaluation, paying attention to ensuring transparency and objectivity in results of internal evaluation. Secondary evaluation is performed to evaluate the quality of internal evaluation as well as confirm project performance using primary evaluation results. As a result, both quality of evaluation and project performance has certainly improved as shown in Figures 3-13 and 3-14.

   As another effort to secure transparency, JICA discloses its evaluation results in a timely manner by uploading the results to its website and issuing Annual Evaluation Reports and other publications as well as holding open seminars.