The Middle East encompasses high-income countries, most of which produce oil, as well as less developed countries, most of which do not produce oil. Each country has 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 Lebanon conflict, the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf Crisis, the Yemen conflict, and the Iraq war. Unstable political conditions continue in Palestine and Iraq. After the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan is still characterized by severe security conditions. However, multi-layered and multi-faceted reconstruction assistance continues to be provided by the international community, including Japan.

Recurrent terrorism and conflicts in the Middle East have a tremendous impact on the stability of the world economy. Therefore, support for reconciliations among different ethnic groups, religions, and social classes leading to regional stability are called for.

In the oil producing countries where finance is relatively abundant, infrastructure such as transportation and information networks is developed at a high standard; however, human
resources development in the public sector is a big issue. On the other hand, in relatively low-income countries which are not blessed with resources, the priority tasks are to address issues related to health, education and the delay in rural development. There are also some cases where development assistance is greatly affected by a country’s political situation and security conditions, such as in the case of Palestine and Afghanistan. It is necessary to implement development assistance under appropriate policies based on accurate understanding of situations that greatly differ from country to country.

As for reconstruction assistance for Iraq, JICA continues to support the development of human resources in the public sector based on Japanese government policy by collaborating with yen loans and grant aid. With regard to assistance in Palestine, based on the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity concept proposed by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi during his visit to Palestine in 2006, JICA is promoting regional development of the West Bank, mainly in Jericho. In Afghanistan, JICA is carrying out projects that show quick results in line with the request of the Afghan people, as well as medium- to long-term capacity development projects for the purpose of enhancing human resources and organizations that will take charge of future growth and development.

As the international situation has drastically changed since the terrorist attacks in the US in September 2001, the international community has been paying greater attention to what roles development assistance can play in promoting stability and peacebuilding in the Middle East. As described above, assistance in the Middle East is closely related to the international situation. Based on the trend of the international situation, JICA implements projects while closely coordinating with Japan’s governmental policies and principles.

### Addressing Priority Issues in JICA Programs

#### Efforts by Area

**Palestine: Toward Peace in the Middle East**

A Middle East peace conference was held in Annapolis, Maryland, in the United States in November 2007, at which peace talks between Israel and Palestine were reopened. In December 2007, an international conference of donors was held in Paris. Despite confusion and other issues that exist in Gaza, assistance to Palestine is being more actively provided.

Through technical cooperation projects in areas of local administration, maternal and child health, and waste control which started in fiscal 2005, JICA has enhanced various administrative services offered by the Palestinian Authority to support the improvement of livelihoods, especially in Jericho.

The Corridor for Peace and Prosperity concept is based on the belief that the development of trust is important in promoting peace, and to this end, sustainable economic development based on inter-regional cooperation is essential.

Based on this idea, JICA has been offering technical cooperation for improving agricultural skills, and conducting studies for building an agro-industrial park in the future, and for comprehensive water management in Jordan Valley. These projects aim to develop agriculture and its related industries as the primary industry in the regional economy of the Jordan Valley, including Jericho. They have been implemented from the perspective of a program approach in which they are organically coordinated with assistance in various sectors – such as governance, agriculture, and tourism – to boost project results.

As for the Gaza Strip, where political and security conditions are unstable, the dispatch of Japanese experts to this region is difficult. Therefore, follow-up cooperation such as support for activities of the former training participants’ alumni association is the core of the assistance.

#### Afghanistan: Expanding Projects amid Numerous Development Issues and an Unstable Security Situation

Approximately six years have passed since Japan began reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan in earnest in July 2002. Initially, JICA began emergency assistance projects such as road development, school construction, emergency reconstruction of medical facilities, and vocational training of returned ex-combatants in Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamiyan. Subsequent assistance was provided to a wide range of sectors, such as those related to tuberculosis control and maternal and child health, teacher education, literacy education, vocational training, reconstruction of agricultural experiment stations, rural infrastructure development, and community empowerment.

Reconstruction efforts through assistance from donor countries including Japan are showing successful results in the area of...
The Dream Stage: Cinderella Music Concert

In the Palestinian refugee camps, where people designated by the United Nations (UN) as refugees have been living for around 60 years, approximately 66,000 students attend the primary and junior high schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Due to the scarcity of schools, teachers and classrooms, the schools are run in two shifts of morning and afternoon using the same buildings, each class consisting of over 40 students. Since 2000, JICA has been providing cooperation in the education sector by dispatching Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) to schools in the main six Syrian cities to mostly teach physical education and music-related classes, with the hope of bringing a sense of hope to the future of the children who suffer as refugees.

The Cinderella Contest started in spring 2006 as a national music event to encourage the refugee girls, who had never gone outside of their camps, to learn to dream by having them pretend to be Cinderella. For the third event held in April 2008, the system of ranking and giving awards, as well as the limit on the number of participants, were dispensed so that more students could have fun taking part. More family members and local residents were able to enjoy this year’s concert, which was held at the outdoor music hall of a refugee camp. Members of UNRWA and JOCV will continue to work together through trial and error so that the children’s dream stage will develop to become even more meaningful for the refugee community.

(JICA Syria Office)

In specific terms, in 2007 JICA began Phase 2 of a project in the education sector that continues to demonstrate a wide range of development needs, provided cooperation for improving rice farming based mainly in Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, and formulated a master plan for Kabul Metropolitan Area Development aimed at resolving the rapidly increasing number of urban issues in the capital city of Kabul (see Feature). The important matter to tackle in the future will be determining how best to support the implementation of the various projects that are being proposed under this master plan.

In Afghanistan, which is in need of speedy reconstruction assistance, there are calls for projects that can bring the swift results strongly desired by the Afghan people. At the same time, however, enhancement of human resources and organizations that will take charge of the country’s future growth and development is essential. Therefore, JICA will continue to implement medium- to long-term capacity building projects in the future.

Iraq: Peace building

Five years have passed since the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003, and the political process for democratization is progressing as evidenced by the implementation of a national election in December 2005 and the inauguration of an official government in May 2006. Further, the Iraq Compact, which is the framework for a new partnership between Iraq and the international community, was established in May 2007.

At the International Donors’ Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq held in October 2003, the Japanese government announced grant aid cooperation worth US$1.5 billion and yen loans worth US$3.5 billion as support for Iraq. JICA is promoting institutional capacity enhancement of Iraq-related organizations and development of human resources with an emphasis on synergy effects through combining grant aid cooperation and yen loans in the priority areas of democratization, water, health, electricity, and agriculture.

For example, since 2006 JICA has been continuously providing training in Japan to personnel related to port authorities in southern Iraq who are targeted under the Sector Reconstruction Project implemented through a yen loan.

Additionally, as security in Iraq is very poor, national reconciliation is a major issue. In March 2008, JICA held the Seminar...
on the National Reconciliation of Iraq to which 11 members of the Iraqi delegation including members of parliament and heads and members of religious and ethnic parties were invited. At the seminar, the Iraqi participants attended lectures related to peace building, discussed priority issues in Iraq such as federalism, local government, amendment of the constitution, and a proposed Oil and Gas Law, and also visited Hiroshima.

**Water Resources Management and Environmental Protection**

The Middle East, where most of the land is arid, has the scarcest water resources per capita in the world. In addition, population growth and industrialization are exacerbating the lack of water resources. Recent economic development, industrialization, and rapid urbanization have worsened environmental problems such as water pollution, solid waste, and air pollution.

JICA provides cooperation to improve technical levels in respective countries, in areas including water resources management and urban and rural water supply in the water resources sector as well as sewage management, waste control, and environmental management in the environment sector.

**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. Region-wide cooperation in which countries in the region capitalize on their strengths 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. To promote South-South cooperation, which is an embodiment of these goals, JICA conducts many training courses for Iraq and Palestine in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Tunisia.

As for South-South cooperation for Africa, cooperation centered on third-country training is implemented in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco in line with the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process. Outcomes of Japan’s past cooperation and characteristics of the host country are utilized in line with the needs of countries in conducting third-country training.

**Taking their own initiative in recovering the rich water resources**

Iraq, drawing on the rich water resources of its two large rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, has had flourishing agriculture since ancient times. However, the water flow of both rivers has dropped since the 1970s due to increased water intake by the countries upstream. The decline in the amount of usable water due to inappropriate water resources management and salification of soil brought on by deteriorating irrigation drainage systems has become a problem. Moreover, as 7 million laborers work in the agriculture sector, restoring agriculture through improved productivity is a major issue facing postwar Iraq, which is suffering from a high unemployment rate.

Since 2006, JICA has been implementing the Irrigated Farmland Water Management Project that aims to introduce and disseminate techniques that lead to improvement of water usage efficiency and agricultural productivity at irrigated farmlands within Iraq. Training courses that respond to the technological issues are set up mainly in Jordan and also in Egypt and Syria, and the curriculum is also incorporated into the training courses offered in Japan. Many trainees from Karbala, which is the implementation site of the pilot project, repeatedly attend the training programs offered in each of these countries. The goal is, through the advancement of the capacity building efforts, for the Iraqis to become capable of independently implementing and managing the pilot project. Through the dedicated guidance of the Japanese experts who at times teach until late at night and the trainees' passionate will for reconstructing their home country and eagerness to learn the technology and gain knowledge, the capabilities of the Iraqi trainees are steadily improving.

(JICA Jordan Office, Iraq Unit)

**Front Line Iraq**

**Water Management in Irrigated Farmland**

![Trainees from Africa learning rice milling techniques in Egypt](image1)

![Japanese expert giving instructions to Iraqi trainees (engineers)](image2)

![Syrian counterparts visiting a project site related to reproductive health in Jordan](image3)