



International seminar

Research

Utilizing the Stellar Qualities of Aid Implementation Organizations to Promote Policy-Oriented Academic Research

Establishment of JICA Research Institute

With the establishment of New JICA on October 1, 2008, the research functions of the Institute for International Cooperation at the old JICA were merged with those of the JBIC Institute at the former Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) to establish the JICA Research Institute (JICA-RI).

The JICA Research Institute intends to make its presence known through its capabilities in two areas: utilizing cumulative experience and knowledge of aid implementation organizations, and offering practical proposals. The Research Institute is actively seeking to take the lead in policy-oriented academic research and development aid trends, to contribute to analysis of development issues in developing countries as well as of JICA program strategies, and to strengthen information and knowledge sharing in Japan and abroad.

Basic Principles of Research Activities

The international community has been grappling with the problems facing developing countries—including poverty, armed conflict, and environmental degradation—but solutions to many of the most basic remain out of reach. To promote research of value in finding the solutions, JICA-RI has laid down four basic principles and four priority research areas, as listed below:

1) Comprehensive Perspective:

JICA-RI will conduct cross-field research and analyze developing country issues from a comprehensive perspective, encompassing the individuals, society, state and market.

2) Integration of the Past and Future

JICA-RI will conduct studies building on the operational experiences and analytic results of the former JICA and JBIC, as well as of other development aid organizations worldwide. It will incorporate these into the future activities of the newly created JICA.

3) Unraveling East Asia's Experiences

JICA-RI will analyze Japan's growth experiences and the growth experiences of the East Asian neighbors with whom Japan has been closely associated for lessons applicable to other regions. In so doing, it will carefully study the history and culture of each target country or region to examine the applicability of different development models.

4) Open Activities and Collaboration with the International Community

JICA-RI intends to be a research institute that is open to domestic and international researchers, aid-implementing organizations, government bodies, private-sector corporations and NGOs. It intends to share information on its research processes and findings while welcoming collaboration.

Priority Research Areas

The JICA Research Institute broadly classifies research activities into the following four areas:

1) Peace and Development

Violence and social turmoil undermine human security and critically deter socioeconomic development. In the 21st century, the number of fresh armed conflicts has been declining but the risk of conflict recurrence remains high, a reflection of incomplete state-building processes in post-conflict situations. There also are difficult transborder events that stretch the conventional paradigm of national security and threaten the lives and safety of ordinary people, such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In the research area of peace and development, we conduct studies on conflict prevention, state building and transborder security issues.

2) Growth and Poverty Reduction

Japan and its East Asian neighbors are considered economic development success stories, having realized growth and reduced poverty. Africa,

by contrast, stirs concern about the sustainability of its economic growth. JICA-RI studies the reasons for successful growth and poverty reduction in Japan and East Asia and also the reasons for Africa's vulnerability. We also explore success factors that can be shared, to help design development strategies for Africa from East Asian perspectives.

3) Environment and Development/Climate Change

Resource and environment governance is increasingly an important issue, as the sharing of public space expands with economic globalization and as interest-driven conflicts over public resources escalate. JICA-RI studies conflicts that arise among stakeholders in developing countries over basic public resources in order ultimately to create a blueprint for future support on environmental concerns. Whether on a global or local scale, environmental deterioration and destruction are major threats to human life. Climate change especially looms, threatening developing countries through droughts and floods. Low-income groups in developing countries are the most vulnerable to these "natural" disasters, as they tend to live in hazardous marginal areas, whether urban or rural. JICA-RI studies measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation suitable for developing countries, utilizing the latest natural sciences knowledge and methodologies and JICA's own accumulated experiences and data acquired through its development assistance activities.

4) Aid Strategies

Our research in this area covers two broad themes: "aid effectiveness" and "the emerging aid agenda." Researchers in aid effectiveness apply rigorous academic analysis to JICA's field operations in order to evaluate them from the viewpoints of human security and inclusive/dynamic development. Their research projects

are conducted as comparative case studies of capacity development, innovation in empirical impact evaluation, and the role of emerging donors. Researchers in the emerging aid agenda emphasize the medium- and long-term perspective with an eye to the post-MDG (Millennium Development Goal) era, after 2015. They conduct studies on development potential in Islamic societies and knowledge creation in developing countries.

In conducting research in these areas, JICA-RI places special emphasis on the following five priority themes: state-building of “fragile states”; African development and the Asian experience; response to climate change; analysis and improvement of aid effectiveness; and issues related to ASEAN integration.

Status of Activities

In the short time since the October 2008 establishment of the JICA Research Institute (JICA-RI), a series of research projects has already been launched. An overview of these projects can be found on the Research Institute's website.* As these research projects are launched, a system is being developed

to facilitate cooperative efforts between practitioner-turned researchers and academic researchers.

JICA-RI emphasizes network-style research based on partnerships with internal and external research organizations and implementation organizations. Joint research is underway with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other multilateral organizations; and also with Columbia University in the United States as well as Oxford University and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in the United Kingdom; and with the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN ISIS).

Since the Research Institute is a relatively recently established organization, it is only in the early stages of activity organization. Even so, interim results are already available for various projects. In February 2009, interim results for research into climate change were announced at an international academic conference in Bangkok, Thailand. On March 31 of the same year, the “Symposium on Human Security in ASEAN Integration: Possibilities and Outlook” was held at which JICA-RI presented interim reports on research related to this theme pursued jointly with ASEAN

ISIS. Moreover, individual researchers have presented their own reports at various academic venues, including the Japan Society for International Development, the Japanese Economic Association, and the World Water Forum.

Interim research results are displayed as working papers on the JICA-RI website* as they become available, inviting evaluation from a wide range of readers. Final research results are expected to be published as papers or in book form. JICA-RI will also issue “policy briefs” that extract policy and practical operation messages from research results, presenting them in an easy-to-understand format.

The November 25, 2008 symposium convened to mark JICA-RI's establishment (see below) was attended by many people involved in the aid and development sector, from both Japan and abroad, who conveyed their expectations for the new organization. To answer those expectations, the Research Institute is engaging in policy-oriented academic research that calls on the experience and knowledge gained by aid organizations over the years.

* <http://jica-ri.jica.go.jp/ja/index.html> (JP)
<http://jica-ri.jica.go.jp/index.html> (EN)

Symposium to Celebrate the Launch of the JICA Research Institute Fusion of Science and Practice: Toward Cooperation between Researchers and Practitioners

On November 25, 2008, a symposium celebrating the launch of the JICA Research Institute was held. At this symposium, the role and direction of the Institute were discussed.

At the event, JICA President Sadako Ogata called for a research institute that can systematize the cumulative experience gained by aid implementation organizations, that can deepen independent research, and that can take a comprehensive approach capable of responding to the complexity and multidimensionality of development aid.

JICA-RI Director Keiichi Tsunekawa emphasized the need for a fusion of theory and practice, for cooperation between researchers and practitioners, and for the building of a network of researchers in Japan and abroad. He then announced the names of three researchers who will represent JICA Research Institute in their respective research domains. Their names and speech themes are given below:

- Shinichi Takeuchi (Visiting Fellow)
“Peace and Development: A New Challenge”
- Megumi Muto (Research Fellow)
“Connecting Policy and Action: Research on Climate Change”
- Atsushi Hanatani (Senior Research Fellow)
“Social Dimension of Public Goods Management in Rural Africa ”

In addition, Mr. Kiyoshi Kodera, Executive Secretary, World Bank/IMF Development Committee, and Mr. Simon Maxwell, Director, ODI (U.K.), used their opportunity as guest speakers to explain their visions of the role they believe JICA-RI should play. Participating panelists also discussed the global financial crisis and the adverse effect the economic slowdown is likely to have on international aid, warning that the world should not use these events as an excuse to turn its back on people living in poverty in developing countries.



Sadako Ogata, JICA President



Keiichi Tsunekawa, JICA Research Institute Director