

cooperation to provide continuous seamless support ranging from disaster emergency response to recovery and reconstruction as well as building disaster prevention structures. JICA regards its assistance for disaster response and prevention as a type of intellectual property that Japan should transmit to the world, and will strengthen its efforts in this area as a form of support that benefits the international public interest within the global community.

Initiative for Reducing Poverty: Contributing to the Attainment of the MDGs

Progress of the MDGs

The United Nations Millennium Summit was convened in New York in September 2000 with the participation of 189 nations. There are now five years remaining until the agreed-upon 2015 attainment period for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were formulated with a view to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, a target for the international community in the 21st century. Through initiatives carried out to date by each country and institution, a certain amount of progress is being made toward attaining each

target, beginning with a reduction in poverty, including expectations that the population of the world's most poor will decline from 1.8 billion in 1990 to 920 million in 2015. However, initiatives have lagged in other areas, including achieving universal primary education, improving maternal health and preventing infectious diseases and providing access to safe water. Regionally, delays are serious in fragile countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia.

Moreover, the impact of world circumstances, including concerns about an increase in the proportion of poor and starving following the financial and economic crises in 2008 and the effects of the crises on maternal health, in addition to climate change, conflicts and natural disasters such as the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, are having a large effect on progress toward achieving the MDGs. Therefore, the world must now make greater efforts with even stronger determination to attain these goals.

Initiatives toward Achieving Targets

The past 10 years (2000–2010) was a period of large growth for

Case Study

Promoting Rice Cultivation in Africa

Uganda: Rice Promotion Programs (NERICA Rice Promotion Project in Uganda/Technical Assistance Support to Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture Development Project in Eastern Uganda)

Just as in other African countries, poverty and food shortages are major issues in Uganda. The staple food in Uganda is plantain bananas, maize and cassava. However, in recent years, the consumption of rice, which is easier than other staple foods to cook, has shown a steady increase, particularly in urban areas. As a result, demand for rice has outpaced domestic production and imports have risen, leading to an outflow of foreign reserves. On the other hand, because rice can be sold at higher prices than other staple crops, the production of rice enables farmers not only to secure their own food, but also to earn valuable cash income needed for educational and other expenses.

Compared with other countries in eastern Africa, Uganda is relatively blessed with water resources. Nevertheless, many regions lack sufficient rainfall or do not have irrigation facilities, and therefore rice cannot be cultivated in paddies like in Japan. Accordingly, the Rice Promotion Program encourages the cultivation of both paddy rice cultivated in paddies and upland rice cultivated in fields.

In supporting upland rice cultivation, JICA dispatched experts to train researchers crucial in promoting rice cultivation in Uganda. Concurrently, JICA is promoting NERICA* rice cultivation among farmers through the provision of equipment and materials necessary for such technical support. For paddy rice cultivation, JICA aims to increase yields in pilot regions

in the eastern province by providing technical assistance to extension workers and small farmers. This assistance includes fundamental paddy rice cultivation techniques, such as rice paddy leveling, bund making and line planting, as well as methods for maintaining irrigation channels and the use of basic agricultural equipment.

JICA regards Uganda as a leading country within its plan to double rice production in Africa. Besides dispatching experts, JICA is providing assistance for broadening the

base for rice cultivation by dispatching Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers to promote the spread of NERICA rice cultivation, as well as by establishing the Rice Research and Training Centre.

*NERICA (New Rice for Africa): An upland rice variety developed in 1992 through the hybridization of African and Asian rice. NERICA combines the high yields of Asian rice with the strong disease and drought resistance of African varieties. This rice is expected to play a valuable role in promoting rice cultivation in Africa, which depends on rain-fed cultivation.



NERICA in an agricultural test site in Uganda cultivated under the technical assistance of a Japanese expert (Photo by Yuji Shinoda)