

# Middle East — Achieving Regional Stabilization through Inclusive Development

In 2011, many Middle Eastern countries were greatly shaken by ongoing political turmoil. The region has undergone many conflicts in its history, which have impoverished its people and also had a grave impact on international politics and the global economy. Accordingly, the international community is being pressed to come up with new responses to the problems facing the Middle East.

Approximately 60% of the world's oil reserves and 40% of its natural gas reserves are in the Middle East. Japan depends

on imports from the Middle East for nearly 90% of its domestic oil consumption, which makes the peace and stability of this region a critical factor for Japan's economic development. In addition to providing conventional assistance, JICA is implementing cooperation with the aim of playing a major role in the Middle East and in the international community as a whole by actively responding to the newly surfacing issues of the region.

## Key Aid Strategies

### Supporting Regional Stabilization with Focus on Six Priorities

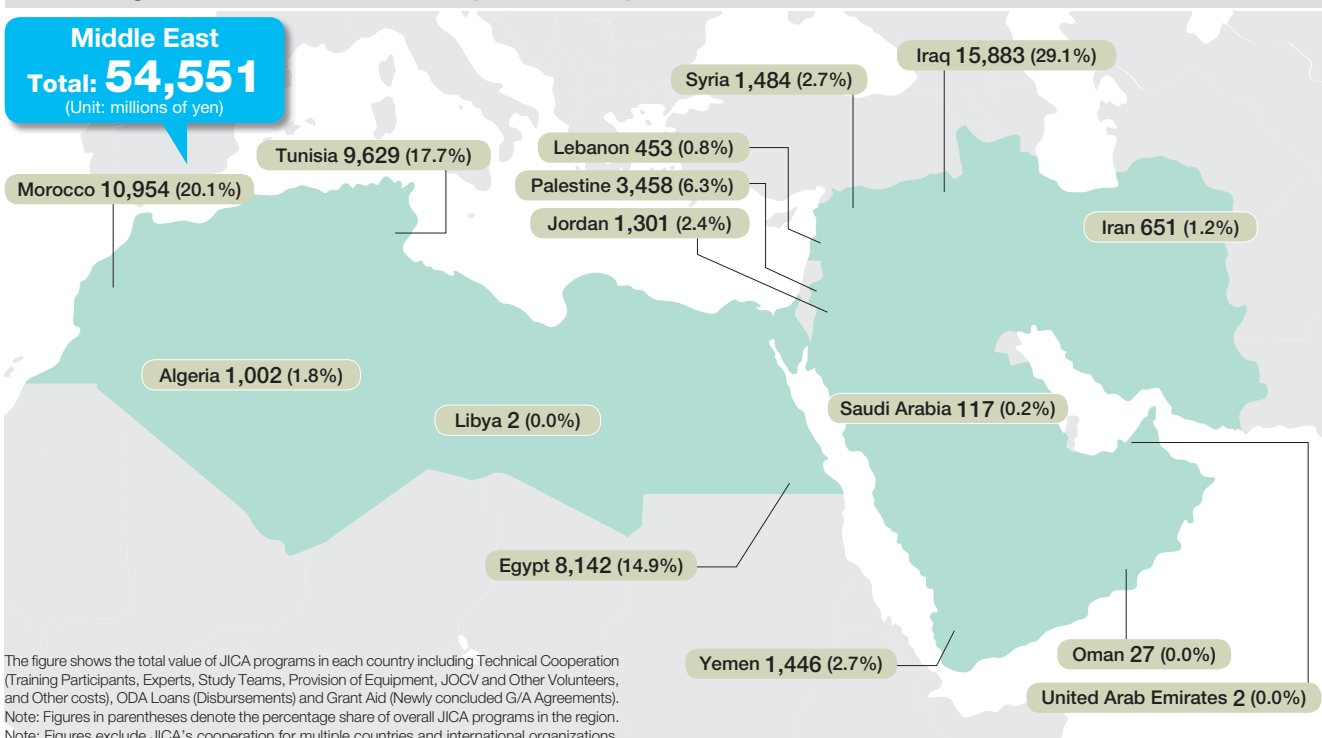
The year 2011 marks the beginning of a major political upheaval in the Middle East. The political turmoil of Tunisia that began in January quickly led to a similar political reform movement in Egypt, which in turn spread to generate political unrest in Yemen, Libya, and Syria. People in many countries were able to make use of this opportunity to reveal to the world the deadlocked and domineering political and economic standards that had been prominent in their countries. This unrest indicates clearly urgent needs for democratization and the improvement of employment opportunities (particularly for young people), and that overlooking these issues could lead to the incitement of new factors that threaten the security of the Middle East region.

Furthermore, given that the region has been host to the Gulf

War, the Iraq War, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, assistance for nation-building and national reconstruction in the Middle East is also an important issue from the standpoint of international politics and economics.

By trying to maintain a neutral and objective position toward all parties in the region, Japan has acquired the trust of countries involved in disputes with each other. Japan seeks to build on this trust in carrying out efforts together with the international community based on the following priorities: 1) support for new nation-building (assistance for the policies and systems of countries such as Tunisia and Egypt that are trying to make the transition towards new systems); 2) promotion of peacebuilding assistance (reconstruction in Iraq, support of the on-going peace

### JICA Programs in the Middle East (Fiscal 2010)





process in the Middle East via assistance provided to the Palestine Authority, etc.); 3) development of socioeconomic infrastructure and support for measures mitigating poverty in low- and middle-income countries; 4) support for water resource management; 5) support for human resource development tailored to the unique local needs of each country; and 6) support for cultivating industries that facilitate employment.

### ■ Assistance Tailored to the Different Needs of Oil-Producing and Non-Oil-Producing Nations

The Middle East is broadly separated into countries that enjoy high incomes from oil production and low- to middle-income countries that do not produce oil. Moreover, its populations are characterized by diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultures, which have created a complex social makeup that requires finely tuned aid that meets the individual needs of each country.

Raids on ships by pirates in the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca have been more frequent in recent years, and JICA is providing aid for anti-piracy measures. These include training for officers in charge of the coast guard authorities in Yemen, Oman and some Asian countries in 2009.

## Country Overviews and Priority Issues

### ■ Iraq

The repeated conflict and economic sanctions that Iraq has suffered since 1980 have led to the destruction of much of the country's economic and social infrastructure and impoverished the country. Now, eight years after the Iraq War, many Iraqis are still living in abysmal conditions with shortages of electricity and clean water. Iraq has the world's third largest oil reserves, and the government relies on revenue from oil exports for approximately 90% of its annual revenue, which means that trends in oil prices significantly impact the country's finances.

In order to meet Iraq's massive reconstruction and development needs, JICA has provided comprehensive assistance in the following four priority areas: 1) Strengthening the Foundation for Economic Growth (improving the production and export capacity for oil and gas, improving agricultural productivity); 2) Activation of the Private Sector (electric power reconstruction, transportation and telecommunication development); 3) Rehabilitation of Basic Living Infrastructure (developing water supply and sewage, improving the quality of medical care and education); and 4) Governance Development (building a foundation for administration and developing human resources) [ → See the Case Study on page 94]. From the end of the Iraq War up until the end of fiscal 2010, JICA committed to 15 projects for a total of ¥364.6 billion through ODA Loans, and carried out various training courses for more than 4,400 Iraqis through Technical Cooperation. JICA is expanding

its assistance in Iraq with the objective of achieving independent development, while paying consideration to the regional balance between the northern Kurdish, mid-western Sunni, and southern Shia regions.

In fiscal 2010, dredging work carried out via an ODA Loan was completed for Umm Qasr Port, Iraq's southern gateway to the ocean. Also, in Iraq's northern Kurdish region, experts in the agriculture sector were dispatched for the first time since the conclusion of the Iraq War. In this way local efforts have been achieving progress.

Despite a long political blank following the country's General Parliamentary Elections of March 2010, a popular-participation-type administration beyond ethnic background and religion was formed in December of the same year. The security situation continues to necessitate vigilance due to the scheduled withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq by the end of 2011. Nevertheless, efforts aimed at independent development are anticipated to pick up speed under the new administration.

JICA is proactively implementing reconstruction assistance by talking directly with government officials in Iraq and through project site visits in order to further enhance its cooperation campaign on the local level.

### ■ Palestine

In accordance with the Oslo Accords signed in September 1993, a Palestinian Interim Self-Government was established and the international community accelerated aid in order to achieve peace in the region. However, the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000 caused deterioration of the security situation in the area and the peace process stalled at that point. Subsequently, the Israeli government has imposed a blockade on the occupied territories, and the Palestinian economy has been severely damaged because of the restrictions imposed on transportation and limited distribution of goods as well as a decline in job opportunities for the Palestinian workers within Israel.

In July 2006, the Japanese government proposed the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity concept as a medium- to long-term framework for future co-existence and co-prosperity of Israel



Meeting between President Ogata and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad on his visit to Japan (November 2010).

and Palestine. This framework is based on the idea that a “two state solution” is crucial to achieving peace between Israel and Palestine, and is intended to strengthen the socioeconomic foundation of the Palestinian Authority in order to ensure a smooth transition to economic independence for future statehood, while building trust with neighboring countries through regional cooperation among Palestine, Israel and Jordan. Working towards realizing the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity concept, JICA is providing Technical Cooperation for improving agricultural technologies and supporting the promotion of sustainable tourism, as well as surveying and providing Technical Cooperation for the construction of an Agro-Industrial Park in the Jericho area.

Furthermore, from the perspective of supporting future nation-building in Palestine, JICA is extending support in the following seven priority areas in view of the First Japanese-Palestinian High-Level Governmental Consultative Meeting: 1) support for small and medium-sized enterprises and promoting trade; 2) agriculture; 3) tourism; 4) local governments; 5) restoring fiscal health; 6) water and sewage; and 7) child and maternal health [→ See the Case Study on page 89].

## Egypt

In February 2011, long-time Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned as a result of the democratization demonstrations that had been held since January. After the collapse of the Mubarak administration, Egypt’s constitution was temporarily suspended and presidential authority was entrusted to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Going forward, a People’s Assembly election



Conduit repair work at a pilot site being carried out together with an irrigation association (Water Management Improvement Plan Phase II in Egypt).

is scheduled for November 2011 and there is also a plan to hold an election to select a new president in 2012. This process will lead to Egypt being reborn as a democratic state.

The political unrest in Egypt is said to be due to the large number of people that have failed to receive the benefits of development despite the country’s favorable macroeconomic growth in recent years, as youth unemployment remains high and the poor face skyrocketing food prices.

JICA provides cooperation with the priority on sustainable growth and creating employment, and reducing poverty and improving living standards. This cooperation is in response to the result of political turmoil in the country, and JICA will continue

## Case Study

## Support for Early Childhood Education in the Middle East

### Effective Cooperation through Volunteer Dispatch Coupled with Training in Japan

**JICA volunteers serving in early childhood education in the Middle East are promoting “Learning through Playing” while sharing information beyond borders. The efforts of the volunteers are steadily producing positive effects that are further confirmed by their counterparts who have received training in Japan.**

#### “Learning through Playing” for Each Country

Early childhood education in the Middle East often means intellectual trainings where children engage in memorization and dictation exercises. JICA volunteers specializing in early childhood education in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia contribute to improving preschool education on-site aiming at spreading child-centered care with methodologies to support the sound mental development through playing with hands,

physical exercises, etc.

In 2008, along with dispatching volunteers, JICA launched a training program in Japan with the objective of human resources development related to early childhood education in the Middle East. It is not always simple for the volunteers to explain the significance of Japanese childcare in Arabic. Collaboration between the JICA volunteers and the training participants, including counterparts, who have a deepened understanding of Japanese early childhood education through interacting with Japanese preschool children and their teachers, is strong support for Japanese cooperation for the development of the expertise of counterparts in this field.

Since 2009, the JICA

volunteers and their counterparts have been implementing regional training for sharing information within the region. This is a good opportunity to discuss their common challenges by sharing various practices in each country with those who received training in Japan as well.



These smiles are to change Arab early childhood education (Syria).

to contribute to the economic and social development of Egypt utilizing the experience of Asia in its compound approach that combines Technical Cooperation with financial cooperation. Specifically, JICA implements assistance for developing transport, electricity, and other economic infrastructure so as to improve the investment environment, assistance for soft aspects such as the Institute for International Studies and Training (IIST) in order to vitalize economic activity, and assistance that contributes to improving living standards, such as for promoting school health services in different regions in Egypt, a country with a low level of income, and developing water and sewage systems in the Nile Delta area. JICA also provides assistance by dispatching experts to support elections, which is also a pressing issue, and developing a new Five Year Development Plan.

### Morocco

Morocco has been able to steadily achieve economic growth and reduce poverty after implementing economic liberalization policies since the 1990s. However, the reduction of urban-rural economic disparity and effective use of the country's rare water resources remain priority issues.

For this reason, JICA provides cooperation mainly in the areas of rural development and water resource management. Specifically, JICA supports the development of water and sewage systems in rural areas, improves urban environments, and develops rural roads with ODA Loans. Furthermore, JICA allots emphasis to third-country training under its Assistance Program for Francophone African Countries.

### Tunisia

In Tunisia, on January 14, 2011 longstanding President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali stepped down from office. Citizens began to hold demonstrations in the city streets, and the political unrest that forced the President out of office was later to be called the "Jasmine Revolution," taking the name of Tunisia's national flower. This led to later pro-democracy movements in surrounding countries such as Egypt.

These demonstrations were triggered by the death of a young man without a job who committed suicide by self-immolation. Tunisia has a high unemployment rate that stands out in the younger generations, and it is particularly high for individuals with higher education levels. The issue is that national industries have yet to advance sufficiently enough to create employment opportunities for such individuals. Furthermore, the areas where the first demonstrations broke out were rural areas with larger poverty levels than Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, and it is necessary to also address the issue of rectifying regional disparity.

JICA provides assistance for developing Tunisia's industries, mitigating disparity, and preserving the environment. Specifically, in addition to developing economic infrastructure such as railway and roads, JICA uses ODA Loans to construct higher education institutions and research institutes, train science and engineering human resources, and support local economic promotion programs. Moreover, JICA dispatches experts and provides other assistance to support elections, which are currently a pressing issue.

#### Case Study

### Yemen Improvement of Enrollment Rate and Quality of Basic Education Program (Broadening Regional Initiative for Developing Girls' Education (BRIDGE) Project)

## Nationwide Expansion of a School Based Management Model that Promotes Girls' Education

**Yemen has one of the largest gender gaps worldwide in terms of basic education. The net enrollment ration in primary education is 85% for boys and 65% for girls. Accordingly, there are high expectations for the nationwide dissemination of the BRIDGE model developed by JICA.**

### Creating a Model that Works in the Field and Establishing it as Policy

JICA has been implementing projects since June 2005 in order to promote girls' education, carrying out pilot activities to improve the management of 59 schools in Taiz Governorate with the participation of local governments, schools, and communities.

Community religious leaders (Imam) have used religious messages in order to spread awareness of the importance of girls' education, and a Mothers' Council

has even been established for the purpose of reflecting the opinions of mothers in school operations. As a result, the number of female students increased by 1.5 times and the number of male students has increased by 1.3 times during the same period. Furthermore, when cooperation started, the ratio of school principals that answered, "boys and girls share the same right to an equal education" was a mere 9.4%. By the completion of the project, however, this had risen dramatically to 96.6%.

JICA has developed these pilot activities into the BRIDGE (Broadening Regional Initiative for Developing Girl's Education) model. In Phase II of the project, which began in December 2009, cooperation is being implemented on the policy level and efforts are being made to disseminate the BRIDGE model throughout the country, while guidelines are also being drafted to promote girls' education together with the Ministry of Education and other Development Partners.



A primary school where the BRIDGE model has been implemented. (Photo: Marcos Abbs)