



Vietnam: Children in Cu Lao Cham (Cham Islands) [Photo by Shinichi Kuno]

Director General's Message

Southeast Asia and Pacific

Hidetoshi Irigaki

Director General
Southeast Asia and Pacific
Department



Advancing Together by Strengthening Partnership

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries enjoy sound economic growth in the world. Among others, assistance to Myanmar is a remarkable activity in the fiscal year 2012. For Myanmar, following the announcement of Japan's new economic cooperation policy in April 2012, JICA started full-scale supports in three pillars: improvement of people's livelihoods, capacity building and institutions development, and sustainable economic development.

While some original ASEAN member countries have maintained high economic growth, shortage of infrastructure development becomes an emerging issue as ASEAN countries have held down infrastructure investments since the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s. JICA is extending support for rebuilding infrastructure development plans. Some of our cooperation includes preparation of the infrastructure master plan in the Jakarta metropolitan area in Indonesia and the transport infrastructure development road map in Metro Manila in the Philippines. To encourage infrastructure investments, JICA assists with strengthening frameworks for public-private partnership (PPP), formulating PPP projects and providing financial cooperation for it. In these countries, other issues also emerge along with the increase of income level. For example, aging becomes a serious social problem in Thailand. Industrial advances are essential in order to avoid the "middle income trap." JICA supports to deal with these issues, by using Japan's lessons and experiences.

In contrast to original ASEAN member countries, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam have substantial development needs in many sectors. JICA has provided comprehensive assistance, such as improvement of social services, infrastructure development, and human resources development. For realizing ASEAN integration by 2015, JICA also provides cooperation in

strengthening ASEAN connectivity, inclusive development that narrows development gap among the region, environmental management, climate change and disaster management.

In the Pacific, countries with abundant natural resources such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have experienced relatively smooth economic growth. In the fiscal year 2012, JICA extended the first ODA loan to Vanuatu for harbor construction. While the 6th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM6) was held in Okinawa in May of 2012, JICA has provided cooperation, addressing regional common issues, such as efficient water supply system, adaptation to climate change, and disaster management, in collaboration with local governments, international organizations and other donors.

In the fiscal year 2013, ASEAN and Japan mark the 40th anniversary of their friendship and cooperation. Beyond cooperation in traditional sectors, it is necessary to cooperate in emerging areas which both ASEAN and Japan would face with. It would become more important to learn each other between ASEAN and Japan in years ahead. JICA will enhance its partnership with ASEAN, as a pivotal partner, with the support of Japanese local governments and civil groups, as well as extending joint cooperation with the ASEAN countries to assist Africa, the Middle East and other regions.