South Asia
Cooperation for Long-Term Growth in Asia While Reflecting the Region’s Diversity

Key Aid Strategies

- Quality Growth and Poverty Reduction
- Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Aid
- Countermeasures on Environmental Concerns and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction

The South Asian Region, where 1.6 billion people live in an area about the size of Europe, embraces a variety of religions, races, cultures, and languages. Situated between the Pacific Ocean and the Middle East and Africa, this region has great potential for growth, but at the same time, contains income disparities and religious conflicts arising alongside development, instability caused by natural disasters, etc.

Stability and growth of the South Asian Region are essential to the stability and growth of the whole of Asia. JICA focuses on Human Security and extends its assistance to suit needs that are specific to each of these countries, while promoting cooperation to strengthen the connectivity among the countries and areas, under the concept of the Indian Ocean-Rim Economic Region.

JICA has set the following three priority areas for its aid programs in South Asia:

1. Quality Growth and Poverty Reduction

Although the impoverished population in South Asia is decreasing, partly due to recent economic growth, the region is still home to hundreds of millions of impoverished people, a number second only to Sub-Saharan Africa, creating a common problem across all the countries. JICA firmly supports the development of the region by building infrastructure such as transportation systems, electricity, water supply and sewerage services, and also by strengthening political systems and promoting cooperation with Japanese private companies.

Also in other fields such as health and medical care, education, agriculture, and rural development, JICA has been making efforts in achieving fair and high-quality growth that enables sustained poverty reduction by delivering projects that take into consideration the socially vulnerable and impoverished segments of the societies. The gender gap is also a major issue in South Asia, hindering growth and poverty reduction. JICA is engaged in gender-related assistance, such as improving women’s status and social empowerment.

2. Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Aid

JICA aims to contribute to the peace and stability of countries and areas in the South Asian Region. There are programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as in Sri Lanka, which has been shifting to the development stage from the early reconstruction stage, 30 years after the internal conflict, in May 2009. JICA is...
also active in Nepal, which is in the process of establishing a government under a new constitution.

3. Countermeasures on Environmental Concerns and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction

South Asia is a region strongly influenced by natural disasters, including cyclones, floods, and earthquakes. In Nepal, where a great earthquake hit in April 2015, emergency support was provided through the Japan Disaster Relief Team, followed by JICA’s support in restoration and reconstruction of the country, in cooperation with international organizations and other partners and in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Also, especially in the mountain, delta, and island areas in the South Asian Region, influences from climate change are expected to be high. JICA is providing support for measures on climate change and for protecting the environment.

Country Overviews and Priority Issues

- India

India has been increasing its global presence in past years. Its growing population exceeded 1.2 billion in 2010, and its economic growth rate in fiscal 2015 is expected to surpass China’s rate, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The new Prime Minister Modi visited Japan in September 2014 and the Tokyo Declaration for Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership was announced, maintaining a close relationship between the two nations after the inauguration of the new government.

In order to achieve the annual growth rate of 8% during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–2017), the Government of India estimates that $1 trillion of investment is necessary for infrastructure development. Prime Minister Modi is also promoting the “Make in India” initiative to lure manufacturers to India in order to develop India’s manufacturing sector, which currently accounts only for 30.7% of Indian GDP. Under these circumstances, JICA not only supports this initiative through individual projects but also contributes to the improvement of the overall investment environment by combining policy reform support and infrastructure building, such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor,1 the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor,2 and the Tamil Nadu Investment Promotion Program.

To improve the logistics network, India also considers it important to strengthen connectivity with other South Asian countries and the Southeast Asian Region, and JICA is expanding the scope of Japan-India cooperation through activities for the Northeast Connectivity Improvement Project [see the Case Study below].

- Bhutan

Bhutan is a landlocked country located at the eastern tip of the Himalayas, with a population of about 760,000. Bhutan is known for its commitment to the fundamental concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The concept aims to create a society that focuses not only on economic growth but also on people's happiness. Bhutan’s average GDP growth rate has been approximately 8% from 2009 to 2013, and this high economic growth was achieved based on supplies of hydroelectric power utilizing the country’s abundant water resources. On the other hand, its location distant from other regions in India, social development due to issues that include security situation in part of the region. As a result, the per capita GDP of the region stays at less than 60% of the Indian average. JICA has supported the enhancement of livelihoods of the residents in the region through initiatives such as the ODA Loan project Tripura Forest Environmental Improvement and Poverty Alleviation Project. It also has supported income increase and enhancement of electric power conditions in the northeastern states through four projects that built and repaired hydroelectric plants, including the ODA Loan project Lower Borpani Hydroelectric Project.

In recent years, northeast India is drawing attention for its role as a gateway to the Southeast Asian Region because of its ethnic and cultural similarity and closeness to Southeast Asia. The Indian government regards this region as an important developing area and is improving the infrastructure of the region for the purpose of revitalizing cooperation with neighboring countries, including trade. JICA has supported, among other things, the Lower Borpani River Development Project. This project is expected to secure a regional lifeline that is resistant to disasters, and also to revitalize the regional economy and expand trade with neighboring and Southeast Asian countries, by improving the internal and external transportation network.

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1. A Japan-India joint project of regional development to construct a Dedicated Freight Corridor between Delhi and Mumbai through a Japanese ODA Loan, and to develop infrastructure such as industrial parks, logistics bases, power stations, roads, ports, residences, and commercial facilities along the railroad, mainly through private investments.

2. A Japan-India joint project of a comprehensive regional development plan in the rapidly growing Chennai-Bengaluru area, succeeding the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor.
hand, a number of challenges have emerged in recent years, such as issues related to urban environment due to rapid urbanization, job creation, regional disparities, and diversification of the economy.

Based on the priority areas of the Government of Bhutan, JICA is focusing aid programs on the following four main sectors: (1) agricultural and rural development, (2) local infrastructure improvement, (3) building foundations for industrial development, and (4) environmental issues and climate change.

**Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a land-locked country with a population of 30 million, located in a key area that connects South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. 80% of the population is engaged in agriculture, while the population is rapidly increasing, especially in urban areas, since the beginning of the reconstruction aid at the end of 2001.

JICA, together with the Afghan government, has been extending its assistance in two priority areas: infrastructure development, mainly in the Kabul metropolitan area, and agriculture and rural development. It is also pursuing projects that contribute to Afghanistan’s economic growth, including job creation and the stabilization of the lives of citizens in the country. For the Kabul metropolitan area, development of social and economic infrastructure such as highways and electric power, construction of a new city in the Dehsabz district, and redevelopment of Kabul city are in progress. For agricultural and rural development, JICA extends its assistance in strengthening administrative functions and capacities, human resources development, development and management of water resources, and improvement of agricultural productivity, along with others. In addition, JICA runs the Project for the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development (PEACE). This Project sends up to 500 training participants to Japanese graduate schools for medium- and long-term human resources development. JICA has also been cooperating closely with international organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and international NGOs including the Aga Khan Foundation in order to extend our assistance to areas that have been difficult to reach in the past.

**Pakistan**

Pakistan has the world’s sixth-largest population, at about 190 million people. Following the September 11 Attacks in 2001, the role of Pakistan in maintaining peace in the region, including Afghanistan, has been highlighted. As a result, the international community has placed increased importance on the stable and sustainable development of Pakistan. The country’s large workforce could be a driving force for economic growth, and Pakistan has much potential as an emerging economic market. However, economic growth has been sluggish in recent years because of the unstable political and security conditions as well as unfavorable factors such as the lack of direct investment. Furthermore, the country faces various development issues, such as the large number of people still left poverty-stricken—about one in four citizens is poor. Recently, the Pakistani government has been making positive efforts toward economic and regulatory reforms in facing these challenges.

Consequently, the emphasis of JICA’s assistance for Pakistan is centered on three themes: (1) improvement of economic infrastructure, (2) ensuring human security and improvement in the stability of society, and (3) promoting human resource development. JICA, together with the Afghan government, has been extending its assistance mainly in the Kabul metropolitan area, and agriculture and rural development. It is also pursuing projects that contribute to Afghanistan’s economic growth, including job creation and the stabilization of the lives of citizens in the country. For the Kabul metropolitan area, development of social and economic infrastructure such as highways and electric power, construction of a new city in the Dehsabz district, and redevelopment of Kabul city are in progress. For agricultural and rural development, JICA extends its assistance in strengthening administrative functions and capacities, human resources development, development and management of water resources, and improvement of agricultural productivity, along with others. In addition, JICA runs the Project for the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development (PEACE). This Project sends up to 500 training participants to Japanese graduate schools for medium- and long-term human resources development. JICA has also been cooperating closely with international organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and international NGOs including the Aga Khan Foundation in order to extend our assistance to areas that have been difficult to reach in the past.

**Case Study: Afghanistan: Supporting Female Afghan Police Officers**

**Holding a Workshop in Turkey on Gender Issues**

JICA held a workshop to improve the capabilities of the female police officers who support Afghan women living under severe conditions on the front lines.

**How to Cope with Violence as a Female Police Officer**

Women in Afghanistan live under severe conditions. While violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, child marriages, and honor killings are widespread, social standards such as male-female segregation are deeply rooted in the society, making it difficult for women to directly consult with male police officers.

This leads to high expectations of the roles of female police officers. However, the female officers themselves also suffer from prejudice, discrimination, sexual violence, and so on, and in some cases being police officers can put their lives in danger.

To support Afghan female police officers who work under such circumstances, the Japanese government, with other cooperating parties that included the United Nations Development Program, conducted a four-month training in police work starting in November 2014 in Turkey. JICA dispatched three specialists in gender issues to this training and held a workshop titled “Thinking about Violence against Women,” in which a lecture was given on the current situation and the causes of violence, and group works were conducted to help the participants realize the connection between gender inequality and violence and understand how to deal with women who have experienced violence.

Despite the worries of the specialists prior to the training, participants surprised the specialists by being very active and vocal in the workshop. The participants made comments such as “As a police officer, I would like to support women who have experienced violence,” and “I would like to have opportunities to talk with influential people in our area, because their understanding is important to prevent violence against women.”

The participants had various backgrounds in becoming police officers. One person became an officer despite opposition from her family. Another said that she had herself been a victim of violence and wanted to prevent the recurrence of similar cases. Listening to such views of each participant and guiding them to become aware of the situation led to the healing of the participants themselves. After returning to Afghanistan, we expect that the participants will firmly support local women in the future, making use of the knowledge and the learning that they have obtained in the workshop.

1. In general, “honor killing” refers to the homicide of a woman by members of her family and relatives due to the perpetrators’ belief that the victim has brought shame upon the family, for reasons such as having sex before or outside marriage or refusing to enter a marriage arranged by her parents.

Female police officers actively participated in the workshop.
of social infrastructure, and (3) stabilization and balanced development of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas. JICA is placing priority on the assistance for solving energy shortages, which have been a bottleneck for economic activity, and for enabling the domestic manufacturing industry to produce value-added content. In other areas, JICA is strengthening polio countermeasures and vaccination programs by combining technical cooperation and financial support in a single program and also building infrastructure and establishing frameworks for water and sewer systems in urban areas. Furthermore, JICA supports the overall disaster prevention sector in accordance with the National Disaster Management Plan, which JICA assisted in drawing up, utilizing Japan’s own knowledge, and is also engaged in anti-terrorism measures for security improvement and support for internally displaced people.

**Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean with a population of 20.48 million. Ever since the end of the 26-year conflict in 2009, post-conflict reconstruction demand is stimulating economic growth. Sri Lanka is maintaining a high real GDP growth rate of 7.3%, and its GNI per capita has reached $3,170 in 2013; Sri Lanka is now recognized as a middle-income country. However, at the same time, Sri Lanka still faces challenges, such as infrastructure improvement for further economic development, fixing economic disparities among regions, and promoting interracial harmonization after the conflict. Disaster prevention is another important challenge for Sri Lanka, where natural disasters such as landslides and floods often occur.

As part of the measures to overcome these challenges, JICA signed an ODA Loan agreement for Digitalization of Terrestrial TV Broadcasting Project in September 2014. This project aims to effectively utilize the country’s limited frequency resources, as well as to provide access to a variety of information through multilingual broadcasting, disaster news, and so on. Multilingual broadcasting will also contribute to interracial harmonization between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, who fought against each other during the civil war. Furthermore, JICA engages in activities to build infrastructure for transportation, electricity, water supply, and sewerage, to reduce the risks of disasters, to achieve better livelihoods in the least developed areas, and to improve productivity in agriculture [see the Case Study below and on page 76].

**Maldives**

The Maldives is a small island country comprising 1,190 islands, with a population of 350,000 in 2013. Per capita GNI was $5,600 in 2013, the highest in South Asia. However, the economy of the Maldives relies largely on tourism and fisheries, and it is vulnerable to external influences such as natural disasters and the market trends of the world economy.

With the decreasing trend in the fish catch in recent years, JICA has extended its support to draw up a master plan for the fishery sector since October 2014, aiming at the diversification of the fishing industry and the sustainable management of fishery resources. JICA will continue to cooperate with the Maldives, focusing on development of local industries, the environment, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.

**Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has the eighth-largest population in the world, approximately 160 million people, and through development of industries that include garments and apparel, the country has kept economic growth at an annual average rate of 6% in the past 10 years. Since 2010, Bangladesh has been the fastest-growing economy in the region. The country has the eighth-largest economy in the world, with a GDP of $285 billion in 2013. Per capita GDP was $1,560 in 2013, and its GNI per capita was $2,310 in 2013. JICA has been supporting the effort to reduce poverty, and about 30% of the population was living on less than $2 per day. However, education, healthcare, and rural infrastructure development remain a challenge for the country.

JICA has extended its support to Bangladesh, focusing on development of local industries, the environment, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.

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**Improved Transportation Network**

**Case Study: Sri Lanka: Improvement of the Transportation Network Program**

A Bridge of Peace That Supports Reconstruction

In Sri Lanka, JICA supports the efforts for reconstruction after the ethnic conflict and the tsunami disasters, as well as for economic growth, through the improvement of the transportation network.

**Improvement of the Transportation Network after Conflicts and Disasters**

Fishery and rice cultivation used to be prosperous in Sri Lanka’s Eastern Province. However, the region became a battlefield of the ethnic conflict that lasted for 26 years from 1983. Many people were killed and injured, major infrastructure was destroyed, and the economy deteriorated during the conflict. Moreover, the damage caused by the Sumatra Earthquake and the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 further widened the economic disparities between the Eastern Province and the Western Province, where the metropolis of Colombo is located.

Under such circumstances, JICA has supported improvement of the poor transportation infrastructure network within the province, and also with the other regions, for the purpose of reconstructing the Eastern Province and narrowing the disparities between the Eastern and the Western provinces.

The ODA Loan project Pro-Poor Eastern Infrastructure Development Project has enabled, for example, stable transportation of the rich agricultural products of the region to large-scale markets through initiatives such as the restoration of a total of 100 kilometers of the province’s national road, the major traffic route there. Meanwhile, the Project for Construction of Mannmunai Bridge under Grant Aid has made it possible to travel 24 hours a day between the inland area and the coastal area, which are separated by a lagoon and used to rely on ferries that stopped at night and during floods. The travel time was also shortened from 60 minutes to one minute. The Mannmunai Bridge is a symbol of peace and reconstruction, connecting the inland side, which suffered from the ethnic conflict as well as from tsunami and flood damage and had fallen behind in reconstruction efforts, and the coast side, where reconstruction was progressing.

Six years have passed since the end of the ethnic conflict. JICA will continue to support Sri Lanka for further reconstruction, economic growth, and reduction of the disparities among the regions through assistance in the improvement of the transportation network, making full use of Japan’s advanced technologies and knowledge.
years. Recently, Bangladesh is emerging as a fascinating market and a destination for investment, due to its advantages such as rich reserves of low-cost labor and its potential market size. However, the country’s investment climate is not necessarily all favorable, due to inadequate infrastructure development in areas such as electricity, transportation, water supply, and sewerage systems. The country is also highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, and earthquakes. Reducing poverty is an enormous challenge, as approximately one-third of the population is impoverished.

JICA is providing assistance to accelerate economic growth and to overcome the vulnerabilities of the society. The ultimate goal of JICA’s assistance is to achieve sustainable economic growth and alleviate poverty in Bangladesh.

For economic growth, JICA is extending its assistance for developing an urban railroad system to relieve traffic congestion in the capital city of Dhaka and transportation infrastructure between Dhaka and Chittagong, building power plants to solve the problem of electricity shortages, improving urban infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage systems and waste management, and developing special economic zones for the improvement of the investment environment, toward the realization of the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) concept discussed at the Japan-Bangladesh Summit Meeting in 2014.

From the perspective of overcoming the vulnerabilities of Bangladesh’s society, JICA is providing assistance to strengthen the country’s capability to cope with natural disasters, to improve safety in construction, and also to improve basic education and maternal and child health care (see the Case Study below). Furthermore, JICA is providing assistance in building infrastructure in rural areas that have been left behind in economic growth, enhancing local governments’ administrative capabilities, as well as giving support to human resources development and anticorruption measures for public officials to improve governance by the Government of Bangladesh.

- Nepal

A landlocked state located between China and India, Nepal is one of the poorest countries in South Asia. Featuring great geographic and climatic diversity, Nepal is situated between the Himalayas’ 8,000-meter peaks in the north and flat lowlands with an elevation of around 60 meters in the south.

The Maoist Communist Party of Nepal formally began a civil war in 1996, which lasted for 10 years. Since the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement in November 2006, the peace process has progressed steadily. The 2nd Nepalese Constituent Assembly was held in November 2013 for the purpose of drafting a new constitution, and a new government was established. To support the new Nepalese government’s target of graduating from the Least Developed Country category and to achieve equitable and sustainable economic growth, JICA’s assistance to Nepal covers infrastructure development, steady transition to a democratic state, and poverty reduction in rural areas. Above all, the full 160 kilometers of the Sindhuili Road, regarded as a symbol of Japan’s support to Nepal, was completed in March 2015 after a total of approximately 20 years of construction.

However, a major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 hit Nepal in April 2015, causing tremendous damage in the capital city of Kathmandu and the surrounding area. JICA has provided seamless support, starting with the dispatch of the Japan Disaster Relief Team right after the earthquake and continuing on to the following reconstruction process. JICA will continue to support Nepal’s reconstruction activities in the future, through funding for the public infrastructure that is essential for reconstruction as well as through restoration and reconstruction planning based on experiences of earthquakes in Japan, and also through initiatives such as technical cooperation for disseminating earthquake-resistant technology.

Case Study: Bangladesh: Safe Motherhood Promotion Project (Phase 2)

Expanding the Narsingdi Model Nationwide to Save Lives of Mothers and Children

JICA supports maternal, neonatal, and child health improvement by combining technical cooperation and an ODA Loan.

Highly Evaluated by the Government of Bangladesh

In order to achieve the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, the Government of Bangladesh has strengthened its efforts in the field of maternal, neonatal, and child health. Although improvement is seen in indexes such as infant mortality, in Bangladesh pregnancy and delivery still bear high risks, with the ratio of births attended by skilled birth attendants staying at 31.7%.

In the Safe Motherhood Promotion Project, a technical cooperation project that started in 2006, JICA worked on raising awareness of the residents, establishing a community-level supporting system, promoting childbirth preparation, and enhancing health care facilities in the Narsingdi district in central Bangladesh. The results of these efforts included a reduction in the infant mortality rate at medical facilities, through promotion of utilization of medical examinations in abnormal cases and emergency obstetric care. The Government of Bangladesh highly evaluated these efforts, calling them the Narsingdi Model. The government has placed community support and the total quality management (TQM) at medical facilities as a national program, and plans to expand them across the country. JICA supports the government’s plan with Phase 2 of the technical cooperation that started in 2011, as well as with Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (rural community development officers and nurses).

In January 2012, an ODA Loan for the Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health Improvement Project (Phase 1) was agreed for the purposes of providing equipment and materials, improving facilities, and conducting training for safe motherhood. With a combination of technical cooperation and the ODA Loan, JICA has so far given training to over 770,000 people and is working on establishing community-level support systems in approximately 40,000 locations nationwide.