

South Asia

Contributing to “Quality Economic Growth” and “Foundation-Building for a Free and Democratic Society”



Regional Issues

The South Asian region, where 1.8 billion people live in an area about the size of Europe, embraces a variety of religions, races, cultures, and languages. Located roughly in the center of the Indian Ocean-Rim Economic Region, this region has a 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. Hence, JICA focuses on human security and extends cooperation to suit needs that are specific to each of these countries, while promoting cooperation to strengthen connectivity within South Asia and with other regions. Under the Japanese government's “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” and “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy,” JICA also works with other countries and international organizations to implement projects designed to promote quality infrastructure investment and support foundation-building for a free and democratic society.

Fiscal 2017 Initiatives

In fiscal 2017, JICA gave priority to (1) developing economic foundations and improving connectivity, (2) ensuring peace and stability and improving basic public service delivery, and (3) improving access to basic human needs.

JICA activities in these priority areas during fiscal 2017 are described below:

1. Developing Economic Foundations and Improving Connectivity

JICA signed a loan agreement with India for a number of projects and programs. They included the Project for the Construction of Training Institute for Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail, the Project for Construction of Chennai Seawater Desalination Plant (I), the North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project (Phase 2), and the Gujarat Investment Promotion Program. JICA also signed a loan agreement with Bangladesh for the Dhaka Underground Substation Construction Project as part of its efforts to assist in developing infrastructure and improving the trade and investment climate.

2. Ensuring Peace and Stability and Improving Basic Public Service Delivery

In Nepal, many years of JICA's assistance in the democratization process led to the enactment of a new Civil Code, which replaces the General Code, called “*Mulki Ain*,” of the mid-19th century. For the local elections that were held for the first time in 20 years, JICA invited some commissioners and officials of the Election Commission of Nepal to share the election administration procedures in Japan that would be helpful to improve such procedures in Nepal.

JICA supported the development of the capacity of security authorities, including counter-terrorism capabilities. For example, JICA extended assistance aimed at strengthening airport security by Grants for Pakistan and a technical cooperation project in Bangladesh in this particular sector. Furthermore, JICA supported the training of women police officers in Afghanistan.

3. Improving Access to Basic Human Needs

In India, JICA continued with forest conservation support projects aimed at improving the livelihoods of local residents, including women in rural areas and the socially vulnerable. In Pakistan and Bhutan, JICA went ahead with agricultural and rural development projects designed to contribute to livelihood improvement for low-income households. In the health sector, JICA supported polio eradication in Pakistan and Afghanistan by strengthening institutional capacities to prevent infectious and noninfectious diseases.

JICA assistance in disaster risk reduction (DRR)—which has a close bearing on people's lives—included continued support for earthquake reconstruction in Nepal [→ see the Case Study on page 27] and activities aimed at making housing quake-resistant in Bhutan. JICA is also supporting DRR in Sri Lanka. JICA assisted formulation of a DRR road map based on the Sendai Framework



Bangladesh: Cooperation in mother and child immunization [photo by Kaku Suzuki]

for Disaster Risk Reduction and also dispatched a Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) expert team to flood- and landslide-affected areas in the southwestern part of the country in May 2017.

For Maldives, a country vulnerable to sea level rise and other natural disasters related to climate change, JICA is supporting establishing an early warning broadcasting system (EWBS).

Future Cooperation

JICA recognizes that South Asia is home to many poor people and is also vulnerable to natural disasters. At the same time, this region is covered by the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy of the Japanese government. With these facts in mind, JICA will give priority to five aspects: (1) strengthening intra- and inter-regional connectivity, (2) enhancing industrial competitiveness, including improving the investment climate, (3) ensuring peace, stability, and security, (4) improving access to basic human needs, and (5) addressing global issues. These five aspects will involve the following four goals:

1. Quality Growth

JICA will contribute to:

- Building foundations for sustainable economic growth
- Building an inclusive economy and accelerating absolute poverty reduction
- Building a society that allows youth to believe in a better tomorrow and supports them in achieving such a tomorrow
- Strengthening connectivity within South Asia and with neighboring regions

2. Foundation-Building for a Free and Democratic Society

JICA will contribute to:

- Building a public sector that is trusted by the people
- Building institutions that allow the people to fulfill their potential
- Achieving human security with special consideration given to the poor, refugees, women, ethnic minorities, and beliefs, among other factors.

3. Downside Risk Management

JICA will contribute to:

- Enhancing preparedness for natural disasters and accelerating post-disaster reconstruction
- Promoting disease control and Universal Health Coverage (UHC)¹ so that the people can lead a healthy life

4. Development Cooperation that Contributes to National Interests of Japan

JICA will contribute to:

- Building trusting relationships between Japan and South Asian countries of increasing strategic importance
- Promoting Japan's economic diplomacy with a focus on exporting infrastructure and supporting SMEs in overseas business
- Strengthening the safety of ODA officials and experts and eradicating corruption by them

1. UHC is defined as "ensuring that all people can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship."

Nepal: The Program for Recovery and Reconstruction from the Earthquake

Three Years on after the Earthquake: Toward Build Back Better and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Future



Houses being rebuilt by home-builders who received JICA training

Since the devastating earthquake hit Nepal in April 2015, JICA has been providing physical and nonphysical assistance in recovery, reconstruction, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) under the concept of Build Back Better.

The earthquake destroyed half a million homes, many of which were situated in mountainous regions. The extensive damage prompted JICA to implement the Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project, an ODA Loan project designed to develop quake-resistant construction guidelines, train residents and home-builders, and manage mutual-help associations at the community level while financing the construction of quake-resistant housing.

JICA's assistance has not been limited to housing. It has also supported the reconstruction of schools, hospitals, public facilities, and bridges as well as livelihood rebuilding based on the activities of women's groups through a range of aid schemes, including ODA Loans, Grants, and technical cooperation. Moreover, Japanese experts have been supporting the restoration of temples in the former royal palace, which is recognized as a World Heritage Site.

Furthermore, JICA has supported DRR planning in anticipation of future earthquakes with the Project for Assessment of Earthquake Disaster Risk for the Kathmandu Valley.