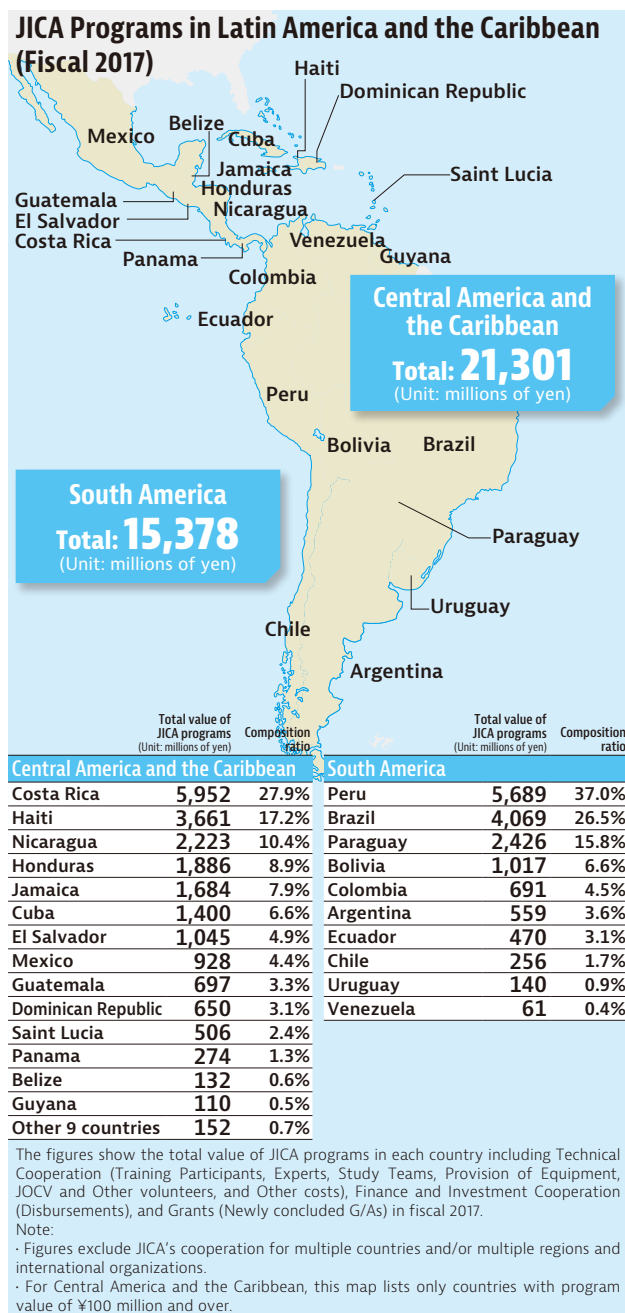


# Latin America and the Caribbean

Strengthening Relations with the Latin American and the Caribbean Region through Reducing Internal Economic Disparities, Developing Economic Infrastructure, and Addressing Global Issues



Latin America and the Caribbean have 33 countries with a total population of 630 million, accounting for 8.4% of the world population. The region's GDP accounts for \$5.1 trillion, about 1.8 times that of ASEAN (as of 2016). Many of the countries in the region have a positive affiliation with Japan due to the presence of more than 2.1 million Japanese emigrants and their descendants (*Nikkei*) and large exports of food and mineral resources to Japan. A number of countries in the region have a track record from which Japan and the world as a whole should learn a lot. For example, Brazil has achieved multiethnic harmony, while Costa Rica, a small country, has been leading the world in addressing environmental issues.

The region's average income is rather high. Countries with high income levels include Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina as well as Chile, which joined the group of high-income countries in January 2018. Although many countries in the region are classified as middle-income countries or higher, the region faces a deep-rooted gap between the rich and the poor as well as special vulnerabilities to climate change and national disasters largely on the part of small island states in the Caribbean.

## Fiscal 2017 Initiatives

In light of the above circumstances, JICA's development assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean aims to (1) focus on specific sectors while leveraging its accumulated assets gained through past cooperation, and (2) further strengthen friendly relations with Japan with a view to working together on a global stage. In this context, JICA puts priority on areas such as disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change measures, and reducing economic disparity as well as infrastructure development that helps to improve the investment climate. JICA also works to strengthen ties with *Nikkei* communities and develop human resources who are familiar with Japanese affairs. JICA's activities in these priority areas during fiscal 2017 include the following:

### 1. Infrastructure Development

Capitalizing on its many years of experience in constructing as many as 24 bridges by Grant projects in Nicaragua, JICA worked to promote "quality infrastructure" in Latin America and the

## Regional Issues

Located on the other side of the earth, Latin America and the Caribbean constitute the region farthest from Japan. Yet, there are many opportunities in our daily lives to feel familiar with the region; we see a number of baseball and soccer players from Latin America and the Caribbean playing in Japan, and we eat salmon and quinoa from the region. The fact that the tsunami in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake reached the shores of the region is another reminder of the inextricable ties between the two areas that are geographically farthest from each other.



Opening ceremony for Las Banderas Bridge in JICA's Grant project, Project for Reconstruction of Bridges on Managua-El Rama Road in Nicaragua

Caribbean. For example, JICA implemented the Rio Blanco–Siuna Bridges and the National Road Construction Project under an ODA Loan to which the Special Terms for Economic Partnership (STEP) apply.

## 2. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

JICA and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) conducted joint research on the disaster resilience of infrastructure. From the perspective of disaster resilience, the joint research reviewed good practices in “quality infrastructure” implemented by Japan and JICA. Lessons learned and recommendations based on research findings were compiled into a report that is now available on the websites of JICA and the IDB. JICA also launched a technical cooperation project known as the Project for Safe and Resilient Cities for Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster in July 2017 in view of the severe damage caused by a major earthquake that hit Ecuador in April 2016.

## 3. Climate Change Measures

In Bolivia, JICA implements the Laguna Colorada Geothermal Power Plant Construction Project, an ODA Loan, under the scheme of Co-financing for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CORE) with the IDB. In Ecuador, JICA supported prospecting for geothermal energy in the Preparatory Survey for Chachimbiro Geothermal Power Plant Construction Project.

## 4. Reducing Economic Disparity

JICA dispatched to Central America a Life Improvement Approach Regional Adviser to support the development of a system for gathering and analyzing cases in which the Life Improvement Approach was adopted, and sharing the results with related countries and personnel. For Guatemala, JICA further promoted the Life Improvement Approach and identified the directions for utilizing it for regional development in order to correct remaining disparities in the country. For

Honduras and Nicaragua, JICA dispatched individual experts and launched a technical cooperation project in order to continue with the efforts to strengthen institutional capacities of local municipalities.

## 5. Human Resources Development with a Training Program That Offers Opportunities to Study in Japan

JICA launched the Program of Japan Expert Development for Future Leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean, a program that offers opportunities to study in Japan. Under this program, three people from the region came to Japan to study at graduate schools.

## 6. Regional Cooperation

In October 2015, JICA agreed on an Action Plan with the Central American Integration System (SICA), a political and policy framework aimed at improving coordination among nations in the region. This plan has five priority areas. In fiscal 2017, JICA started making preparations for regional cooperation projects in two of the five areas: logistics and mobility as well as the conservation of biodiversity and wetlands.

## Future Cooperation

Moving forward, JICA will provide development cooperation designed to achieve “quality growth” to meet the growing demand for infrastructure, utilizing the strengths of private businesses as appropriate. JICA will also promote renewable energy and energy saving, develop human resources for DRR, support environmental conservation, and help to reduce economic disparities. In addition, JICA will collaborate with private businesses and local governments to strengthen ties with *Nikkei* communities and develop human resources who are familiar with Japanese affairs.

### Colombia: Comprehensive Cooperation Aimed at Rebuilding the Lives of Conflict Victims

## Accelerating Peacebuilding Assistance after the Internal Conflict Spanning Half a Century Ended



Learning a demining method that uses mine detection dogs [photo courtesy of CMAC]

Colombia, which was plagued by fierce internal conflicts from the 1960s, saw the conclusion of a peace agreement between the government and the country’s largest leftist guerrilla group in November 2016. The country is now engaged in peace restoration efforts.

JICA had been providing various forms of support for people victimized by this major conflict before it finally ended. Since the peace accord was reached, JICA has been accelerating its comprehensive peacebuilding support.

In May 2017, JICA dispatched a Japanese expert to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) in resettling in their home places and

improving their livelihoods.

In November 2017, JICA started to provide technical training for Colombian government officials responsible for mine action, a process that was urgently needed to encourage IDPs to return home. This training will be provided in Cambodia and Colombia every year until 2022 in collaboration with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), which is now one of the most experienced mine action organizations in the world thanks to JICA’s assistance over a quarter of a century.

JICA will provide continuous support to rebuild the lives of more than seven million IDPs, one of the largest in scale in the world.