

Human Resource Development

Education, Social Security, and Health: Investment in People Is the Linchpin of Development



*Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strongly associated goals are shown in color.

Education

In the developing world, human resources development (HRD) that takes a holistic view of the education sector—ranging from pre-primary education and quality basic education to technical education and vocational training, and to higher education—plays an important role in allowing people to lead better lives and feel happiness as well as in achieving sustainable socioeconomic development and creating an inclusive society.

However, 263 million school-age children and youths worldwide still remain out of school (UNESCO, 2018). It is estimated that at least 610 million children and youths have failed to acquire minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics (UNESCO, 2017). In addition, there are disparities in education due to factors associated with poverty, gender, disability, ethnicity, language, and place of residence. Ensuring quality education for all children is high on the agenda.

Furthermore, the global youth unemployment rate is on the rise, at approximately 13.1% in 2017 (ILO, 2017). It is necessary to expand access to technical and vocational education and training and improve their quality. While access to higher education has been improving steadily, with the gross enrollment ratio jumping 18% in 2005 to 31% in 2016 (UNESCO, 2017), the pace of developing the teaching force, upgrading educational facilities and equipment, and securing research funds is lagging behind, leaving significant challenges in terms of the quality of higher education and research.

In view of these circumstances, JICA assists its partner countries in achieving quality *learning continuity* to meet each individual's learning needs while taking a holistic view of the education sector. Priority is given to three pillars: (1) Improvement in Children's Learning, (2) Human Resources Development for Innovation and Industrial Development, and (3) Education for Building Inclusive and Peaceful Societies. JICA's activities in this sector include development cooperation that capitalizes on the expertise of Japan's government sector, universities, and private sector as well as assistance in the development of human resources essential to nation building.

In addition, JICA promotes global mutual learning that



Egypt: Children at a day nursery supported by the Project for Quality Improvement of Early Childhood Development

transcends national and regional borders and accumulates evidence on the outcomes of its activities. It also works with partner-country counterparts and a wide range of actors to devise innovative solutions.

Social Security

Social security improvement is a means to create a more stable society through reducing poverty and enabling people to live a secure life. From a viewpoint of improving the quality of the lives of all citizens, formation of social security systems is a pressing policy issue in developing countries as well. Some Asian countries that are experiencing an aging population and a changing disease structure need to develop new approaches and meet emerging needs, including community-based integrated care systems and long-term care services. There is a great demand for Japan's expertise in these areas; many partner countries express their desire to learn from Japan for developing new systems and improving the operation of the existing ones. JICA offers various forms of assistance to meet such needs.

Building a vibrant nation with inclusive and sustainable growth requires the involvement of a diverse range of people—including persons with disabilities—in socioeconomic activities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by more than 177 countries, including Japan, stipulates that participation of persons with disabilities must be secured in international cooperation activities. The elimination of social, cultural, economic, political, or physical barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from social participation is a major challenge.

JICA views persons with disabilities as important contributors to development. Reflecting the perspective of disability and development in all of its development activities, JICA focuses on such specific aspects as (1) mainstreaming disability by engaging persons with disabilities as beneficiaries and contributors; (2) improving the functions of public administration through awareness-raising aimed at facilitating the social participation of persons with disabilities; and (3) improving physical and information accessibility.

Developing countries also face increasing cases of work-related accidents and occupational diseases associated with economic development; however, they often lag behind in addressing occupational safety and health as well as labor standards where related regulatory frameworks and enforcement, and supervision arrangements are inadequate. Developing countries also need to promote youth employment for social stability. To meet these needs, JICA assists in creating

Thailand: Project on Seamless Health and Social Services Provision for Elderly Persons



an environment where all kinds of people, including persons with disabilities and older people, can work free from anxiety.

Health

Many people in the developing world lose their lives due to inadequate access to health care. It is estimated that about 0.3 million women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, and some six million children under the age of five lose their lives every year. One in every four children is stunted due to malnutrition. As many as nine million people are killed by infectious disease annually. Outbreaks of emerging and reemerging infectious diseases pose a serious threat especially to countries with vulnerable health systems.

Non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease are an emerging threat as well. Aging constitutes a burden not only on public finances but also on family members who provide care for older people. A large portion of health expenditure is borne by out-of-pocket payment of individuals in developing countries whose financial protection systems are still inadequate. The excessive burden of household health expenditure is likely to lead to inequality in health and all other aspects.

To protect people's health, it is important to ensure that all people have access to basic health services without financial hardship, namely, to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). To achieve UHC, it is essential to cooperate with leaders and

officials not only in health but also in other sectors, including public finance. At international conferences, JICA shares the experiences and lessons learned through its activities. It works with various actors to advocate the importance of achieving UHC on many occasions and takes many opportunities to strengthen collaboration with stakeholders in achieving this goal. In December 2017, for example, JICA co-organized UHC Forum 2017 [→ see page 10].

It is effective to control every epidemic outbreak as soon as possible to address the growing threat of cross-border infectious diseases. JICA thus focuses on building resilient health systems in normal times by supporting capacity building and networking of public health laboratories and relevant research institutions.

Improving maternal and child health remains a serious challenge for many developing countries. JICA addresses this challenge at the global level as well as at the national level. For example, JICA has been working with the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop guidelines on home-based records for maternal, newborn, and child health records including the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Handbook, a tool for strengthening the continuum of care for MCH. JICA also works for nutrition improvement—the lack of which might cause children's deaths and lifestyle diseases later in life—in close coordination among different sectors, including agriculture, sanitation, and education.

As for the emerging threat of non-communicable diseases, JICA focuses not only on improving the therapeutic and diagnostic environment but also on human resources development for prevention and early detection. JICA is assisting each country's effort to tackle the emerging threat by making better use of the existing health systems.

To respond to diverse needs as soon as possible, it is increasingly important for JICA to work with other development partners to accelerate global movement toward achieving UHC, in addition to supporting the efforts of each country.

Honduras: Project for Strengthening Primary Health Care System based on the "National Health Model"

Noticeably Increasing the Ratio of Pregnant Women Who Receive Prenatal Care to Save the Lives of Mothers and Children



A clinic staff member showing patient charts prepared by ESF

Maternal and infant mortality in Honduras is especially high among the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, standing at 129 per 100,000 live births (maternal mortality ratio) and at 16.6 per 1,000 live births (infant mortality rate). Receiving regular prenatal care is essential for pregnant women to detect risks associated with childbirth at the early stage, leading to reduction of both maternal and infant mortality. However, the number of women who receive such care remained limited.

To rectify the situation, the Government of Honduras introduced family health teams (ESF) made up of doctors and nurses

to identify health problems for each family as early as possible. JICA supported capacity building for ESF in two departments through training and other means. As a result, ESF encouraged pregnant women to receive prenatal care, and the percentage of women who received such care showed a conspicuous increase, from one-third to half in one department and from 80% to as much as nearly 90% in the other department.

The Government of Honduras is now preparing to disseminate such a system nationwide in an effort to deliver health services that will leave no one behind, so that the lives of mothers and children are protected.