

South Asia

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



Regional Issues

South Asia embraces a variety of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages, and more than half of the region's population of 1.8 billion are said to be under age 25. While the region shows great growth potential and economic growth is rising steadily, the number of people living in absolute poverty (about 250 million) accounts for one-third of the world's total.* Joint efforts are needed to reduce national and regional disparity, and build inclusive and sustainable communities: the purposes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite steady economic growth, there has been insufficient development of social capital in both hard and soft aspects and human capital. This is a bottleneck for future growth. As the region is also beset with an unstable security situation and is vulnerable to natural disasters, the proper management of the downside risk is essential.

JICA Initiatives

The stability and development of South Asia, a strategic

region linking ASEAN and the Middle East and Africa, is vital for overall global stability and development.

Focusing on human security, JICA is extending cooperation that meets the needs of individual countries and strengthens national and regional connectivity. Under the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and intergovernmental joint statements on strengthening partnerships, JICA is working with various countries and international organizations to promote quality economic growth and foundation-building for a free and democratic society.

In fiscal 2018, 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 2018 are described below.

1. Developing Economic Foundations and Improving Connectivity

In India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, under intergovernmental joint statements, JICA formulated and extended cooperation that contributes to developing economic infrastructure focused on transport (roads and ports) and power, and improving connectivity. There is great demand for developing infrastructure in both hard and soft aspects and for improving the investment climate in South Asia, with its large population and high pace of urbanization. JICA puts importance on projects that strengthen industrial competitiveness and promotes the private-sector investment that is essential for lasting growth.

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

To promote the democratization process in Nepal, JICA provided support for building the foundation for nationwide implementation of community mediation, and helped to improve dispute-resolution capacity at the community level. JICA implemented projects in Bangladesh covering health, sanitation, and water supply for the camp for displaced people from Myanmar and neighboring communities in order to cope with the protracted stay of the displaced people.

JICA also provided cooperation for enhancing counter-terrorism and security capabilities, including strengthening airport security in Pakistan, and improving police capabilities in Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

3. Improving Access to Basic Human Needs

JICA formulated projects aimed at eradicating polio in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and at assisting measures to counter non-infectious diseases in Sri Lanka, as a means of strengthening

* Calculated from data contained in World Bank "Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together Poverty Puzzle"

institutional capacities to prevent infectious and non-infectious diseases in the region. In the field of agriculture and rural development, state laws were amended in India to recognize the participation of female farmers in the decision-making process in Water User Associations at the encouragement of JICA from the very early stage in the irrigation and farming projects currently implemented. This has led to other examples of promoting gender mainstreaming. JICA also formulated an ODA Loan program in India comprehensively covering the fields of basic education, health, and agriculture to achieve the SDGs.

In the area of disaster risk reduction, JICA began technical cooperation that contributes to disaster-resilient nation building, through extensive rebuilding of housing and schools and reconstruction of public infrastructure such as hospitals, based on the concept of Build Back Better in Nepal as assistance under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. JICA also started to formulate ODA Loans and technical cooperation for landslide disasters and technical cooperation to counter urban flooding in Sri Lanka.

Partnerships with Local Governments and the Private Sector

JICA is strengthening and expanding collaboration with local governments and private-sector companies when extending cooperation. For example, JICA is currently implementing a human resources development project in ICT in Bangladesh with the aim of addressing issues facing both Japan and developing countries: local governments, universities, and private-sector companies in Japanese regions with a declining labor population, and developing countries with a shortage of jobs for



Bangladesh: Health and sanitation nurses at the camp for displaced people from Myanmar with sanitation supplies (Project for Capacity Building of Nursing Services)

young people. In ODA Loan projects for Indian agriculture, JICA promoted the introduction and use of outstanding technologies developed by Japanese small and medium enterprises that have been proven effective and applicable to India under JICA's SDGs Business Supporting Survey for public-private partnerships.

Considering that South Asia is home to many poor people and vulnerable to natural disasters, and also Japanese government policies including the vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, JICA will continue to promote cooperation that focuses on strengthening intra- and inter-regional connectivity; enhancing industrial competitiveness, including improving the investment environment; ensuring peace, stability, and security; improving access to basic human needs; and addressing global issues. JICA will also provide assistance for training key personnel who will play a leadership role through programs for receiving foreign students and training participants.

Nepal: Project on Capacity Development for the Implementation of Economic Census 2018

Japanese know-how used in Nepal's first economic census



Census collector (right) asking a Kathmandu bakery owner questions for the census

Although there have been censuses covering population and agriculture in Nepal, the government has never conducted an economic census (national census on business establishments and companies). The economic census provides vital information for policy formulation as the data gained on budgets and implementation systems can lead to an understanding of the national economic structure and scale.

With cooperation from the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, JICA is extending comprehensive technical cooperation from census planning to implementation, tabulation, publication, and analysis of results based on Japanese know-how.

In an effort to increase the response rate and improve data collection efficiency, the National Economic Census 2018 was the first statistical survey by the Nepal government to utilize IT survey methods, including accepting responses over the internet and the use of tablet devices by census collectors. From the experience gained in this economic census, the government will utilize IT in the population census scheduled for 2021 to further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its implementation.

Government statistics such as the National Economic Census 2018 in Nepal are expected to be used for policy formulation and planning to ensure the stability of Nepal's economic structure.