Education

Education is a fundamental human right that everyone must enjoy; it is a crucial element that underpins the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education is also the cornerstone of a peaceful and inclusive society as it fosters the respect for diverse cultures and values.

However, 263 million school-age children and youths worldwide still remain out of school, and it is estimated that at least 610 million children and youths have failed to acquire minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. 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%. It is necessary to expand access to technical and vocational education and training and improve its quality. Access to higher education, which has been steadily improving, remains limited in some parts of the world. For example, the gross enrollment ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa was 9.0% in 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 has collaborated with its partner countries in achieving quality learning continuity to meet each individual’s learning needs while taking a holistic view of the education sector, which encompasses everything from early childhood education, primary and secondary education, technical education and vocational training, to higher education, literacy, and non-formal education. 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 [see the case studies on pages 43 and 57].

JICA has also worked with a wide range of actors to devise innovative solutions to promote global mutual learning that transcends national and regional borders.

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 5.4 million children under the age of five lose their lives every year. One in every 4.5 children is stunted due to malnutrition. As many as 8.45 million children is high on the agenda.

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. In developing countries where 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. JICA has worked with various actors to advocate the importance of achieving UHC and attempted to strengthen collaboration with stakeholders in achieving this goal. As such, JICA takes advantage of occasions such as international conferences and shares the experiences gained and lessons learned through its activities concerning UHC.

It is effective to control every epidemic outbreak as soon as possible to address the growing threat of cross-border infectious diseases. JICA has thus focused 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 has addressed this challenge at the global level as well as at the national level. For example, JICA has co-organized the International Conference on Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Handbook to encourage international mutual learning among a wide range of stakeholders on such topics as how to promote UHC using the MCH Handbook. By working with the World Health Organization (WHO), JICA has contributed to the development of guidelines on home-based records for maternal, newborn, and child health records including the MCH Handbook, a tool used to improve maternal and child health outcomes.

1. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Fact Sheet No. 48, February 2018
2. UIS Fact Sheet No. 46, September 2017
7. Calculated based on data from WHO health statistics and information systems, 2016
for strengthening the continuum of care for MCH. In addition, JICA 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 in hospitals 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 these movements in addition to supporting the efforts of each country.

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. In particular, some Asian countries that are experiencing rapid population aging are urgently required to cope with a number of emerging needs, including long-term care services for the elderly. 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. To meet this demand, JICA has provided necessary information to, and has exchanged views with, these partner countries.

Furthermore, the participation of diverse people—including persons with disabilities—in social and economic activities will help shape a vibrant country with inclusive and sustainable growth. 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) empowering persons with disabilities through leadership training and capacity building for their organizations; 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. JICA also extends assistance to help overcome these issues. In an effort to address youth employment problems, JICA also supports the development of career guidance systems aimed at promoting youth employment.

### Project on Improvement of Literacy Education Management in Afghanistan (LEAF2)

**Achieving education that leaves no one behind: Spreading literacy education that is friendly to women**

Afghanistan, where the prolonged civil war deprived people of school education opportunities, fares poorly in literacy. The country’s adult literacy rate was about 35%, among the lowest levels in the world. The Afghan Ministry of Education (MoE) has been providing illiterate people with literacy education, but their completion rate remains low. A major problem lies in the quality of such education.

To help rectify the situation, JICA implemented this project to scale up literacy education and improve its quality by building the institutional capacity of the Literacy Department of MoE and operating classes in collaboration with the community.

In project pilot sites, more than 2,000 people, including 1,406 women, enrolled in literacy classes that were operated in collaboration with the community, over a period of three years. Some 94% of these women completed these classes. This rate was significantly higher than the completion rate for other types of literacy classes. There were reports that some women who had dropped out in the face of family opposition returned to the classes after village supporters of class operations persuaded their families.

The Afghan government plans to implement this initiative across the country in a bid to provide more opportunities for quality literacy education that leaves no one behind.