

[Column] Cooperation in Infectious Disease Control

Delivering Technical and Financial Aid to Developing Countries to Ensure Human Security

The global community is confronted with the challenge of how to respond to health emergencies caused by infectious diseases and their effects on the economy and society.

Now, globally spreading COVID-19 is posing a grave threat to developed and developing countries alike.

Under its mission of realizing human security, JICA assists developing countries in controlling infectious diseases.

In addition to tackling specific infectious diseases, JICA provides developing countries with technical cooperation and financial assistance aimed at supporting the development of health systems that can respond to epidemic outbreaks.

Response to Specific Infections

Contributing to the Elimination of Filariasis in Kiribati

In October 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the elimination of lymphatic filariasis (LF), a mosquito-borne infectious disease, in Kiribati. To eradicate LF, JICA has been extending cooperation to the 14 Pacific island countries, including Kiribati, by dispatching volunteers to provide patient care guidance and delivering blood test kits. Currently, through a public-private partnership, Japan-based Eisai Co., Ltd. provides a medicine for mass drug administration (MDA) free of charge, while JICA assists MDA at the community level.

Years of Aid in Fighting TB in Afghanistan

For many years, JICA has been assisting Afghanistan in controlling tuberculosis (TB). In recent years, it has been putting more effort into supporting people vulnerable to drug-resistant TB. Specific focus has been placed on the preventive administration of anti-TB medicines for postnatal women—who are at high risk of TB infection—as well as on a pilot project for workplace TB screening designed to detect patients and refer them to treatment.

JICA is now planning to support the procurement of TB medicines and reagents for a period of three years from January 2021, under a Grant in partnership with the WHO.



Laboratory training in PCR testing in a Group and Region Focus course of fiscal 2019 under the Knowledge Co-Creation Program (Photo: Research Institute of Tuberculosis, Japan Anti-tuberculosis Association)

Building Health Systems That Halt Epidemic Outbreaks

Tangible and Intangible Assistance

Building laboratory and surveillance capacities is key to detecting epidemic outbreaks.

In fiscal 2019, JICA implemented Grants for laboratory development in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the same time, JICA launched technical cooperation projects for enhancement of laboratory capacity and to strengthen infectious disease surveillance

in these two countries. In this way, JICA works to build laboratory capacities from both tangible and intangible aspects. In cooperation with Hokkaido University and Nagasaki University, JICA also supports human resources development by accepting students for study in Japan from six countries that are committed to enhancing hub infection laboratories. Under this arrangement, six students came to Japan in fiscal 2019.

In response to the continued prevalence of the Ebola virus disease in Africa, JICA provided emergency training and supplies for DRC and Uganda. JICA also dispatched a Japan Disaster Relief infectious diseases response team to DRC in August 2019.

Comprehensive Cooperation with an Eye on a Post-COVID-19 World

COVID-19, which became a global pandemic at the end of fiscal 2019, has been taking a heavy toll on not only people's health but also their livelihoods and the economy as a whole. JICA deploys comprehensive cooperation across sectors—not limited to public health—while leveraging its accumulated expertise in infectious disease control aimed at preventing outbreaks and reining in their spread.



Papua New Guinea: Community-based MDA as part of efforts to eradicate LF (Photo: Makoto Sekihara)