

# Broader efforts in JICA's EMERGENCY RELIEF

Under current multiple crises, most developing countries have been exposed to multiple vulnerabilities—not only natural disasters, but also political turmoil and conflict, infectious diseases, and others. Once a state of emergency arises, JICA quickly provides cooperation based on the needs on the ground, leveraging its broad network with various stakeholders and Japan's expertise. This article introduces a wide range of JICA's emergency relief efforts, from policy-level cooperation in the recovery and reconstruction stages to psychological care for disaster victims, as well as the dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) in the wake of the Türkiye–Syria earthquake of February 2023.



1 Children attend classes at a temporary school building in Pakistan, where a massive earthquake killed more than 70,000 people in October 2005. 2 In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, JICA provided a variety of support, including the provision of equipment and materials and the strengthening of testing capabilities. The photo shows a hand-washing awareness campaign in Zambia. 3 In Ukraine, where landmines and other explosives have contaminated the country, JICA has provided technical training for mine clearance.

The Türkiye–Syria earthquake of February 2023 caused extensive damage over a wide area. Likewise, in recent years, natural disasters such as torrential rains and droughts caused by climate change have presented serious challenges to developing countries with fragilities in their social and economic infrastructure. These include political turmoil and regional conflict, infectious diseases, food and energy crises, and debt issues.

“In today's globally connected world, such ‘compound crises’ are a new challenge not only for developing countries, but also for Japan,” says TAKAHASHI Makoto, who is involved

in formulating operation strategies at JICA. “Without stability in the international community, Japan cannot hope for its own stability and prosperity. With its experience of postwar reconstruction and as a country prone to natural disasters, Japan is expected to play an even greater role in the international community, based on the guiding principle and philosophy of ‘human security’ that seeks freedom from fear and scarcity and each individual's right to live in happiness with dignity.”

Japan's strength lies in its multilayered approach to meeting needs on the ground. In addition to humanitarian

## Technical Cooperation

Technical Cooperation supports the development of human resources who will promote social and economic development in developing countries and the establishment of administrative systems by utilizing the knowledge, experience, and technologies of Japan. An example of emergency assistance is that which followed the Central Sulawesi earthquake that occurred in Indonesia in 2018. At the request of the Indonesian government, JICA dispatched a survey team shortly after the earthquake and assisted in the formulation of a reconstruction plan.

## ODA Loans

The “Japanese ODA Loan” is provided under concessional lending conditions (long repayment periods, low interest rates) for projects supporting the development of developing countries. The “Stand-by Loan for Disaster Recovery and Rehabilitation” is a specific loan for times of emergency. This ODA loan also contributes to disaster prevention and infectious disease control in the target country while preparing for the increased demand for funds during post-disaster recovery.

## Grants

The Japanese government provides funds to low-income developing countries without the obligation of repayment to support the construction of facilities necessary for social and economic development, and the procurement of equipment and other supplies. Recent examples of emergency assistance include the response to COVID-19 and recovery works after floods and landslides that occurred in Timor-Leste in April 2021.



## JICA emergency cooperation forms

In addition to the Japan Disaster Relief Team (JDR) and supplies for areas affected by natural disasters and other calamities, JICA also provides various cooperation forms in times of emergency through technical cooperation, loan assistance, grant aid, and other programs. The following is a list of major types.

### Emergency Disaster Relief

In cases where large-scale disasters occur overseas, JICA dispatches Japan Disaster Relief teams in response to requests from the governments of affected countries or international organizations in accordance with the decision of the Japanese government. These JDR teams engage in rescue efforts, treat wounds and illnesses, provide emergency relief supplies, and assist disaster recovery. They are made up of the Rescue Team, the Medical Team, the Infectious Diseases Response Team, the Expert Team, and Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) units. JICA also provides supplies such as tents, blankets, and water purifiers.

### Citizen Participation

JICA cooperates in diverse ways with NGOs, local governments, universities, and other organizations that participate in international cooperation activities. JICA dispatches volunteers such as Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) as a part of its citizen participatory cooperation.

assistance such as International Disaster Relief, Japan is able to provide a seamless and integrated array of support, including Technical Cooperation, ODA Loans, and Grants.

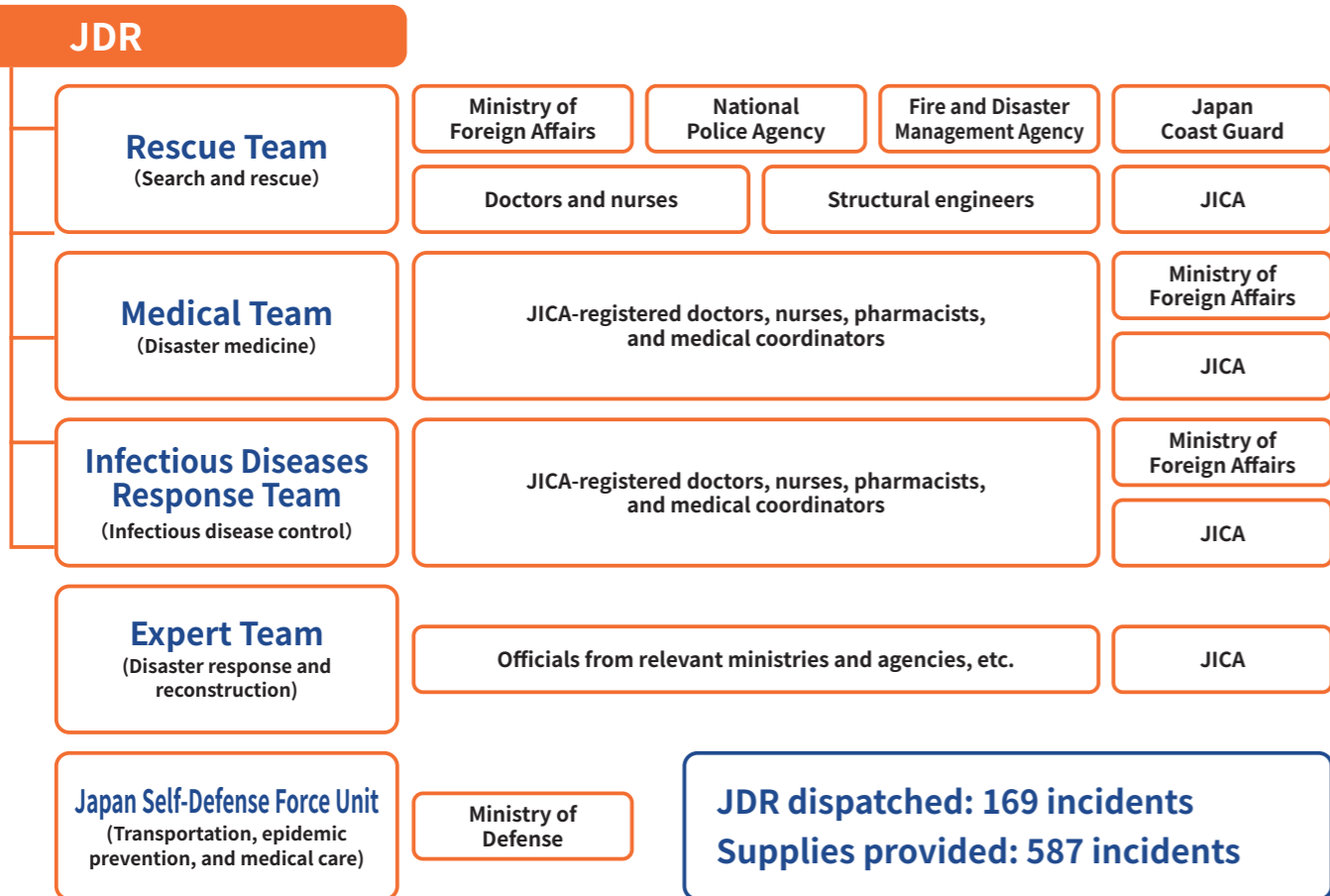
For example, in response to the spread of COVID-19, technical cooperation has strengthened the testing systems of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research in Ghana and the Kenya Medical Research Institute. Under its “Last One Mile Support” concept, JICA provided grant aid to strengthen the vaccine cold supply chain. JICA has also provided financial assistance through loans in more than 20 countries to strengthen emergency medical care and to

promote socioeconomic recovery and stability.

For Ukraine, whose territory has suffered terrible destruction due to Russian aggression, a training program was provided to remove war debris and mines (see p. 6–7). At disaster sites in other countries, JICA's Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs), who comprise a form of citizen participation cooperation, have been active as interpreters and carers for children affected by disaster. JICA's domestic offices have served as nodes for in-depth cooperation measures in collaboration with local governments, universities and research institutes, private

# The Japan Disaster Relief Team (JDR) is made up of five teams

The roles of each team and related organizations, as well as JDR's deployment and provision of supplies to date (as of March 13, 2023).



companies, NGOs, and other organizations in Japan.

JICA has systems in place to promptly provide personnel and supplies in the event of a large-scale disaster overseas. One form of such assistance is the dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief teams (JDR). Specialists in individual fields go to the disaster-affected area as soon as possible and work on the front lines to save lives. JICA is responsible for administrative functions, and possesses a system enabling dispatch of teams at any time in response to emergencies. JDR consists of five teams (see the diagram above). Depending on the request from the disaster-affected country, one or more teams are dispatched.

"The teams are in charge of searching for and rescuing victims. In the case of the Türkiye–Syria earthquake, the team arrived at the site the day after the earthquake and immediately began rescue activities. This swiftness is the result of our daily preparation, and is something to be proud of," says KASUYA Yoshihisa, who is involved in rescue and medical management at the JDR Secretariat. The team members are an elite group drawn from different organizations

such as the National Police Agency, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, and the Japan Coast Guard. One of Japan's strengths is that teams are always well organized, even when called upon at short notice.

The Medical Team, consisting mostly of private-sector medical personnel, has the longest history in Japan, dating back to its predecessor, the Japan Medical Team for Disaster Relief (JMTDR). Following the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the Infectious Diseases Response Team was established in 2015. The Expert Team provides advice on emergency measures and recovery from disasters, such as diagnosing the earthquake resistance of buildings and predicting damage from volcanic eruptions. Japan Self-Defense Force units are also dispatched as needed. At the time of the volcanic eruption in Tonga in 2022, transporting aid by commercial aircraft was difficult due to the pandemic, and Self-Defense Force units therefore delivered aid and helped with water supply issues.

JICA has stockpiled emergency relief supplies in several locations around the world, and provides tents, blankets,



The Infectious Diseases Response Team was dispatched in 2018 in response to the Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The team contributed to strengthening testing and diagnostic capabilities.



A volcanic eruption and tsunami occurred in Tonga in January 2022. When the use of commercial aircraft was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force carried out goods transportation and water supply activities.



In July 2020, a cargo ship ran aground and caused an oil spill off the coast of Mauritius. Expert Teams in the field of environmental science were dispatched three times.



Supplies such as chainsaws and boots were provided to Chile when large-scale forest fires broke out in December 2022.



When an earthquake hit eastern Afghanistan in June 2022, JICA provided blankets, sleeping pads, and other items in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

water purifiers, and other items according to needs in affected areas. In Tonga, hand carts and high-pressure washing devices provided for volcanic ash removal were invaluable.

"JDR activities are highly appreciated overseas, and our team members take pride in their work. JICA works tirelessly to provide support and improve the work environment so that everyone can fully demonstrate their potential in the field," says KASUYA. The Secretariat prepares equipment and materials, studies manuals, and organizes simulation exercises as well as training and drills for each team. In the past, rescue teams from different countries tended to operate in disjunction, which gave rise to confusion and further burdened disaster-stricken countries. International cooperation was thus advanced through the establishment of common rules, and, as KASUYA notes, "From now on, JICA will contribute while paying greater care to international cooperation."

## Providing seamless support in close contact with disaster-affected countries

JICA provides emergency assistance through a variety of projects/forms in a seamless and synergetic way toward subsequent recovery and reconstruction, and this is part of the uniqueness of Japan, says TAKAHASHI. "By working seamlessly from disaster occurrence to recovery and reconstruction, we aim to build resilient societies capable of withstanding the next disaster to come."

During the emergency recovery phase, which follows mobilization by JDR for lifesaving, emergency medical care,

and material support from JICA, cooperation is swiftly provided to remove debris and restore the medical system in accordance with the needs of the disaster-stricken area. During the reconstruction phase, JICA provides medium-term cooperation from the "Build Back Better" perspective, including the sharing of earthquake resistance technologies and the creation of a disaster-resilient nation. In the aftermath of the Türkiye–Syria earthquake, while JDR was on the ground, it began to identify short- to medium-term needs.

"Japan's strength lies in its ability to combine a wide range of support methods for a prompt and inclusive approach, from the policy level to individual mental health care for disaster victims on the ground," notes TAKAHASHI.

JICA's "close support," in which it works together closely with the people of the affected areas to consider their future, is an attitude that is common to all JICA efforts—one that has contributed to achieving mutual trust among the international community. After the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China, JICA provided seamless support from the immediate aftermath to the reconstruction stage, and social media was flooded with countless voices of appreciation and gratitude.

"As global issues become more complex and compounded, we at JICA will offer close cooperation for people living in serious vulnerability in disaster-stricken areas and others, based on the principle of human security," says TAKAHASHI. JICA will expand its contribution by working with the international community for a greater impact and improved sustainability.