



**SICA**  
Sistema de la Integración  
Centroamericana



# REGIONAL COOPERATION

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2015 – 2021



## BACKGROUND

The Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, began its cooperative relationship with the Central American Integration System, SICA, in the year 2000.

Between 2000 and 2021, JICA dispatched several experts to the SICA General Secretariat (SG-SICA) in order to establish a close relationship between both institutions, through the formulation of regional projects aimed at contributing towards regional integration.

In this regard, the establishment of the Five-Year Action Plan for Regional Cooperation between 2015 and 2020 was an important milestone, formalized through an Aide-mémoire signed by SG-SICA and JICA in 2015. This new instrument has enabled both institutions to improve planning, by focusing resources on priority issues, with the engagement of various SICA technical secretariats and institutions.

### Priority topics:



*Mobility and logistics*



*Adaptation of infrastructure to climate change*



*Conservation of biodiversity and wetlands*



*Gender equality and equity*



*Territorial rural development*

# MOBILITY AND LOGISTICS

SICA member countries decided to formulate the “Regional Mobility and Logistics Framework Policy” (Política Marco Regional de Movilidad y Logística - PMRML), approved in 2017 by the Heads of State and Government of SICA. The main objective of this regulation is to harmonize, systematize, and unify the six countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama) in the field of mobility and logistics as a higher policy framework at the regional level. In order to support this initiative, JICA invited the senior authorities from the field of transportation, mobility, and logistics of all six countries to visit Japan in 2016 and learn about the experiences of said country as an input for the preparation of the PMRML.

Based on the PMRML, JICA has supported the following regional projects and actions in coordination with the Regional Transportation, Infrastructure and Logistics Directorate of the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA):

- Study for information and data gathering on mobility and logistics in Central America (final report prepared in March 2017)
- Project to Strengthen Capacities in the Elaboration of Regional Master Plan for Mobility and Logistics for Sustainable Regional Economic Development under the Framework of Central American Economic Integration (period of execution: June 2019 - July 2023)
- Regional course for capacity development on logistics and transportation management for the economic integration of Central America (executed within the framework of the Japan-Mexico Partnership Programme, JMPP, from Japanese fiscal year 2019 to 2021)

The result of the above study showed the need to develop a Regional Master Plan on the topic of mobility and logistics as a tool for implementing the intervention axes of the PMRML. In order to support the preparation of said Plan, the project was initiated with the following expected outputs: 1) Elaboration of the Regional Master Plan of Mobility and Logistics for the Sustainable Regional Development within the framework of the Economic Integration of Central America by 2035; and 2) Institutional and personnel capacity development for the implementation of the Master Plan.



# ADAPTATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Sectorial Council of Ministers of Transportation of Central America, COMITRAN, has prioritized the reduction of the vulnerability of its infrastructure within the strategic areas that COMITRAN addresses, with the thematic inclusion of adaptation to climate change and risk management.

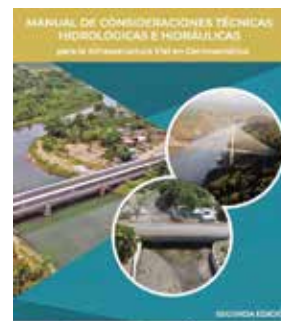
Since 2016, JICA began working together with COMITRAN and SIECA, in order to develop regulations that link risk management and climate change variables in the design and planning of road projects, helping to reduce the vulnerability of the region and enhance their resilience to the natural phenomena that occur year after year.

On the other hand, the funding and technical support of JICA and the arrangements and efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (MOPT) of El Salvador enabled the execution of the Project for Capacity Development of the Department of Climate Change Adaptation and Strategic Risk Management (DACGER) for Strengthening of Public Infrastructure, also known as the “GENSAI Project”. Within the framework of this project, JICA, in coordination with COMITRAN and SIECA, provided technical and financial support to prepare three regional manuals, namely:

**1** Manual de Consideraciones Técnicas Hidrológicas e Hidráulicas para la Infraestructura Vial en Centroamérica [en. Manual of Hydrological and Hydraulic Technical Considerations for Road Infrastructure in Central America] (first edition: 2016, second edition: 2021)

**2** Manual de Consideraciones Geotécnicas y Sísmicas con Enfoque de Gestión de Riesgos para la Infraestructura Vial Centroamericana: Tema, Taludes [en. Geotechnical and Seismic Considerations Manual with a Risk Management Approach for Road Infrastructure in Central America: Topic, Slopes] (first edition: 2019)

**3** Manual Centroamericano de Lineamientos para la Planificación y Diseño de Puentes y Obras de Paso, con Enfoque de Adaptación al Cambio Climático y Gestión de Riesgo [en. Central American Manual of Guidelines for the Planning and Design of Bridges and Passage Works, with a Climate Change Adaptation and Risk Management Approach] (first edition 2021)



# CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND WETLANDS

In 2016 JICA carried out a data gathering study in the eight SICA countries on the topic of ecosystem and wetland conservation. In addition, the senior authorities of SICA member countries from the sector were invited to Japan in 2017, in order to become acquainted with Japan's experiences on this matter. Consequently, on June 19, 2018, a Record of Discussions was signed between JICA and the representatives of the countries of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), in order to reach an agreement on the concept of the Project for Capacity Development on Integral Management and Conservation of Biodiversity at Regional Level in SICA Region, in alignment with the 2015-2020 Regional Environmental Framework Strategy (ERAM2015-2020). This project began in March 2019 and was established for a duration of 5 years, with the following objective and expected outputs:

**Objective:** Management capacity on utilization and conservation of biodiversity of SICA and its member countries is strengthened.

## Expected Outputs:

- 1) A regional information platform for conservation and utilization of biodiversity in the SICA region is established;
- 2) Results of pilot projects, such as good practice and lesson learned focused on small scale rural community and indigenous people are socialized, from the viewpoint of sustainable development and proposal for implementation of regional and national policies;
- 3) Regional organizational and human resources capacity for conservation and utilization of biodiversity are strengthened in coordination with SICA-CCAD.

Regarding Expected Output 1, the “Regional Environmental Observatory” (<https://www.sica.int/oar/inicio>) has already been established in collaboration with other CCAD projects. Regarding Output 2, pilot projects will be implemented in cross-border areas such as: Selva Maya (between Belize and Guatemala), the Gulf of Fonseca (between El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua), La Amistad (between Costa Rica and Panama), and Montecristi in the Dominican Republic. For Expected Output 3, JICA carried out the Knowledge Co-creation Program “Conservación de los Ecosistemas a través de la Gestión Colaborativa en las Áreas Protegidas [en. Conservation of Ecosystems through Collaborative Management in Protected Areas]” in Costa Rica and Japan, inviting participants from the 8 CCAD countries in 2019. In addition, a virtual course “Conservación Participativa de la Biodiversidad [en. Participatory Conservation of Biodiversity]” was held in 2022.



## GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Equity to achieve equality for women is one of the priorities of the Central American Integration System (SICA). Two important milestones along this journey have been the creation of the Council of Ministers for Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA) in 2005 as well as its Technical Secretariat in 2007, and the approval and launch of the SICA Regional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity (PRIEG/SICA) in December 2013.

JICA and the Technical Secretariat for Women of COMMCA (STM-COMMCA) signed an Expression of Interest letter in June 2015, where they agreed to develop a process for the exchange of good practices, promote knowledge management, and contribute to strengthening relations of cooperation and coordination between JICA and the STM-COMMCA, in order to work on issues related to the protection, respect, and promotion of women's human rights, facilitating actions for the implementation of the PRIEG. Likewise, JICA and the Pro Tempore Presidency of COMMCA signed an Aide-mémoire in December 2015, with the aim of establishing and signing a cooperation framework to coordinate initiatives that contribute to the accomplishment and advancement of the PRIEG, specifically in the Strategic Axis of Economic Autonomy.

As part of all this cooperation, JICA carried out a "Study on the economic autonomy of women in Central America and the Dominican Republic" in 2016, whose recommendation includes the establishment of a regional monitoring and evaluation system for the PRIEG.

In February 2017, JICA invited senior authorities and officials responsible for women's economic autonomy from COMMCA member countries to Japan, with the aim of providing them with opportunities to become acquainted with the experiences and activities carried out in Japan in order to subsequently draft a roadmap to strengthen the economic autonomy of women in the region, in line with regional policies. As agreed during said visit to Japan, JICA designed a course especially aimed at SICA member countries in order to share Japan's experience in supporting women's economic autonomy.

Since Japanese fiscal year 2017, JICA has taught the course on women's economic empowerment through business for five consecutive years, training a total of 53 participants from SICA member countries and institutions. Furthermore, in November 2021, JICA assigned an expert to support the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system of PRIEG, who will work with STM-COMMCA and member countries for two years.



## TERRITORIAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT

JICA's cooperation in this area began with the promotion of the Central American Strategy for Rural Territorial Development (ECADERT), which addresses a need among Central American societies to tackle structural obstacles to sustainable and inclusive national development, for which the comprehensive development of their rural territories is essential. Territories, as historically constructed socio-geographical spaces, are associated with the cultural identity of their inhabitants and communities.

In 2016, JICA conducted a study focused on Component 1 of ECADERT: "Institutions for Territorial Rural Development (DRT)" in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The objective of the joint research was to submit a proposal for guidelines for a potential JICA-FAO Technical Cooperation in the regional sphere of SICA, which would be complementary and consistent with the proposals for guidelines and recommendations for each country.

After concluding the study, the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (SE-CAC) requested JICA to provide the services of an expert on rural and agricultural development, who arrived at the SE-CAC headquarters (Costa Rica) in December 2021 to work on a two-year mission



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