

Mariko Fukao reflects on her secondment to the World Bank's Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice



My name is Mariko Fukao, and I have been seconded from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the Health, Nutrition and Population (HNP) Global Practice at the World Bank Headquarters since July 2017. My organization's decision to arrange a secondment to the World Bank's HNP Global Practice is a testament to Japan's strong interest in global health, as well as its leadership in the area. Japan has continued to play a vital role in creating and maintaining global momentum toward achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030, which the United Nations has now defined as a target under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To achieve UHC, the Government of Japan has collaborated with the World Bank, as well as with other international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and JICA.



Mariko Fukao (far right) with her World Bank task team members visiting a research laboratory for vaccines

Since I began my work with the World Bank's HNP Global Practice, I have been fortunate to receive a number of opportunities to help organize various global health events. One of the highlights has been the opportunity to be engaged in organizing the UHC Forum 2017, held in Tokyo and jointly organized by the Government of Japan, World Bank Group, JICA, WHO, UNICEF and UHC2030. The UHC Forum was a huge success and convened over 500 participants, with many more joining online. Some of the high-level participants included heads of state, the UN Secretary-General,

then-World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, numerous heads of development agencies, ministers of health and ministers of finance from over 60 countries, civil society leaders and representatives from the private sector.

Since the UHC Forum was the first global event of its kind, the event's preparation took significant manpower, including long hours for many involved in the process. However, all this work contributed to the Forum's enormous success, creating an impact that was beyond any of our expectations. Most notably, the UHC Forum spurred the adoption of a global midpoint goal for achieving UHC by 2030. The new midpoint goal includes agreements to extend essential health coverage to 1 billion additional individuals by 2023 and halving the number of people forced into extreme poverty due to health care costs.

In addition to working on global health events and witnessing the enormous impact that the World Bank's convening power can have on global, regional and country level events, I also was given the opportunity to conduct health-related operations and research both at the country and global level as a task team member. I have enjoyed working for country-level operations, because it has been incredibly inspirational to witness World Bank teams successfully implement financing projects and produce knowledge products that

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influence policy and bring significant change at country and sub-national levels with close government collaboration.

Since JICA and the World Bank ultimately have a shared goal of achieving global health and well-being for all people, I have come to believe there are numerous opportunities for the two organizations to complement each other's work and maximize their development outcomes. As the only JICA secondee housed within the World Bank's HNP Global Practice, I have seen it as my duty to share information about JICA's work to my World Bank colleagues and help both sides facilitate better communication with one another.

During my time at the World Bank, I have also worked directly on a project in Tanzania called *Strengthening Primary Health Care for Results*. The 5-year project helps to finance Tanzania's national government program to improve primary health care quality, particularly in maternal, neonatal and child health services. Since this project uses both Program for Results (PforR) and Result-Based Financing (RBF) approaches, the task team regularly monitors the results and disburses funds in accordance with its outcomes. By utilizing this approach, I have witnessed the Government of Tanzania become more attentive to producing positive outcomes rather than simply focusing on inputs.

At the World Bank, the task teams are comprised of various members, including seasoned technical experts; specialists, such as financial management and procurement specialists; legal officers; and operations officers, like myself. As an operations officer, one of my duties is to connect information and figure out how different specialists can utilize their expertise together to enable the team to work at full capacity. The longer I spend with the World Bank and become familiar with its operations, the more I will be able to assist my team more effectively. In this way, I greatly look forward to continuing to work and improve my skillsets alongside my colleagues.