

## **JICA Secondee to the World Resources Institute, Ichiro Sato, shares his views on finding balance between providing urgent messaging and ensuring scientific rigor**



The World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization that focuses on sustainable and equitable management of natural resources and the environment. WRI is not an academic research institution in the sense that the primary objective of its work does not lie in exploring scientific truth or in contributing to existing bodies of scientific knowledge. Rather, WRI focuses on using its sound scientific research and knowledge to make positive differences in the real world.

Influencing the real world and making positive changes by using science may sound straightforward. However, the reality is much more difficult than it sounds. There are often tensions between the concepts of providing urgent, unambiguous messaging to influence the real world, and ensuring scientific rigor. At times, these two forces can point us toward different directions.

For example, timing is very important in influencing politics and policy planning. There are often narrow windows of opportunity where such interventions can be effective. Therefore, in order to take advantage of these opportunities, we must effectively align the preparation of our research outcomes and key takeaways to these fluid schedules. Even when there is no specifically identified window of opportunity, we must generally produce and deliver our research outcomes as quickly as possible. This is because globally, we are always pressed for time. With every passing moment, climate change worsens, tropical forests shrink, more species go extinct, and the ocean becomes increasingly polluted. However, this sense of urgency does not often align with competing desires to ensure high scientific rigor. To provide analysis based on sound science, researchers undertake extensive literature review, collect abundant data, conduct careful analysis and have their results reviewed and scrutinized by a diverse array of experts in relevant fields. This rigorous process of producing high caliber research often takes significant time, making it incredibly challenging to deliver outcomes based on external, fluid deadlines.

The different ways in which people present their research outcomes and messages further exemplifies the existing divergence between these two forces. When we seek to make scientifically accurate statements, we may avoid using assertions and offer various possible interpretations. We may also include some of our reservations in the conclusion of our analysis and provide a range of values in our findings, rather than simplifying it down to one single value. We take such precautions because reality is often complex. It is frequently not possible to convey what is happening in reality through one simple value or concept. However, if we would like to communicate our research outcomes and underlying message effectively, we must also acknowledge that for some audiences, too scientific of information can be confusing, indirect or unappealing. For instance, in order to make our messages resonate with busy policymakers and corporate executives, we may have to take a bolder approach of condensing complex realities into simple, succinct language to make our case more appealing.



*Ichiro Sato, JICA Secondee to the World Resources Institute*

## **JICA Seconded to the World Resources Institute, Ichiro Sato, shares his views on finding balance between providing urgent messaging and ensuring scientific rigor**



In such ways, we must frequently grapple with these two competing principles and figure out ways to strike appropriate balance. While this makes things challenging, I do not think it is a bad thing to have to face this dilemma. I believe these notions are worth deliberating because we all must figure out how to strike the most appropriate balance for each given situation to make a real difference in the world. In my view, WRI have been successful at carrying out their mission, because they have squarely faced this dilemma and have searched to find ways to balance these two principles.

---

Ichiro Sato is a Senior Associate with the World Resources Institute (WRI)'s Climate Program and Sustainable Finance Center. His research at WRI focuses on long-term climate strategies, enhancing nationally determined contributions and private sector sustainable finance. JICA has seconded Ichiro to WRI for the last two years, beginning April 2018. Throughout his career at JICA, Ichiro has consistently worked on environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction issues.

JICA and WRI have a long history of collaboration, including co-hosting side events at UNFCCC COP meetings and producing a climate finance mapping report. This secondment program, along with joint research activities, constitute new JICA-WRI collaboration initiative intended to ramp up JICA's efforts and effectiveness in combatting climate change.