

Foreword

The paramount importance of and urgent call for universalizing quality education is widely shared by the international community in both developing and developed countries. Japan launched its new education cooperation policy at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (the UN summit on the Millennium Development Goals), expressing that it will actively promote educational cooperation as an indispensable component for realizing human security through an integrated approach for ensuring human rights, sustainable development and world peace. Japan is also leading the international community in advancing the commitments to strengthen international educational cooperation made on the occasions of G8 Summits and TICAD.

The Japan Education Forum (JEF) is an annual international forum established in March 2004 through government and academic collaboration as part of Japan's educational cooperation. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for open and frank exchanges of opinions and ideas by officials in the public sector, practitioners of international development and NGOs, and scholars, on ways of promoting self-efforts of developing countries toward sustainable educational development, and of effective international cooperation in education. The forum also offers an opportunity to present Japan's own experiences in educational development and its international cooperation in practice.

Local community plays multiple roles in educational improvement and its importance is widely recognized all over the world. Participation of local communities in school education has been emphasized by the UK, US, Japan and other developed countries. In developing countries, communities participate in school construction, financial issues and in-kind contribution to school activities, and school management and decision-making. These show active involvement by the local communities with education promotion, resource mobilization, and quality improvement for school autonomy. Community participation in educational improvement either takes place as a part of decentralizing education administration, or is introduced in the education project assisted by aid agencies, or is advanced as a proactive local initiative concurrently aiming at community empowerment.

It is important to discuss various case studies, effectiveness and challenges regarding relationship between local communities and educational improvement against the backdrop that basic education has been rapidly expanding and the focus of educational development in developing countries has been now directed into improvement of its quality.

This 8th JEF features on the theme of "Educational Improvement and Roles of Local Community" and discusses self-motivated community involvement in the improvement of school education. We warmly welcome all the participants to actively join the discussions.