

[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 strongly acknowledges that for all people and all countries around the world, education is the foundation of self-reliant nation-building and development, and contributes to realizing human security. As such, Japan has been reinforcing its international cooperation for educational development in developing countries through various means including Official Development Assistance (ODA), based on the “Basic Education for Growth Initiative (BEGIN)” since its announcement in 2002. Japan is also leading the international community in advancing the commitments made on the occasions of G8 Summit 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.

As we are all well aware, the endeavor of international cooperation in education places a high priority on achieving Education for All (EFA). While encouraging progresses are being made recently for universalizing the primary education, many difficult challenges remain to be addressed. They include enhancing quality of education, expanding and improving in early childhood and literacy education, closing gender gap, and ensuring education opportunities for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged people. On which challenges should we give primary focus during the remaining five years toward 2015 in order to achieve the goals of EFA?

Thus, the target year 2015 is prompting us to implement many difficult reforms for educational development in a short period of time. This may be an opportune time to revisit with fresh eyes if we are moving to the right direction by asking: what kind of education do we expect to have for the next generation? Will it be the same one as defined by our current goals?

The 7th, Japan Education Forum will present you issues of “Five Years Left until 2015: What Should be Our Priority?” and “Educational Challenges of post 2015 – What does a Vision for the Near Future Tell Us?”. We warmly invite all the participants to actively join the discussions.