

JICA's Educational Cooperation—Providing More Opportunities for “Learning Continuity”

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In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). That same year, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), launched in 2000, ended with certain outcomes and challenges. They were succeeded by the SDGs as new goals to be addressed from 2016 and 2030 by both developed and developing countries. In this way, 2015 marked an important year for development cooperation. This presentation describes JICA's past educational cooperation and its future policies, comparing the period under the MDGs and the post-MDG period and the changes in JICA's educational cooperation with the changes in the environment surrounding educational cooperation.

During the period from 2000 to 2015, JICA established various approaches for educational cooperation. With regard to basic education, the international community shifted its main focus to basic education in 1990. JICA also tried to expand its activities to basic education. From 2000, JICA expanded the kinds and quantities of its cooperation in basic education on a full scale and established its cooperation in such areas as supporting science and math education and improving school management. With regard to higher education, since the start of ODA, JICA had already considered higher education as a priority area of human resource development cooperation, and efforts had mainly been made to establish higher education institutions such as universities (for example, Jomo Kenyatta University, established in 1980). Starting from 2000, the focus was shifted to promoting global academic activities to promote international collaboration among universities and to conduct international joint research. JICA made these efforts in educational cooperation in the 2000s to respond to changing needs. In the case of basic education, the focus was shifted from expanding the quantity of education to improving its quality. Higher education had to respond to the emerging knowledge-based society and globalization. During this time, JICA not only established new educational cooperation projects but also drastically changed its methods. This included establishing programs encompassing cooperation projects; aligning international cooperation with the educational policies of local governments; participation in the sector-wide approaches (SWAPs); linking educational cooperation with other schemes including yen loans; and promoting the participation of NGOs. Through these efforts, JICA conducted training for 850,000 science and math teachers in 42 countries, promoted improvement of school management for 62,000 schools in 16 countries, established a network of top-ranking ASEAN and Japanese universities in the field of engineering, and conducted 78 joint research projects in 39 countries under the Science and Technology Research Partnership Program (SAPREPS). In this way, JICA contributed to global efforts to promote the MDGs.

During the 15-years period, some developing countries experienced rapid economic growth, and global issues shared by developed and developing countries increased. Amid these changes in the global development environment, the SDGs were formulated for both developed and developing countries, encompassing all development agendas, including poverty, climate change and economic growth. With regard to educational development, the SDGs' Goal 4 says, "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning." In 2015, JICA formulated new policies for education cooperation to achieve the SDGs. In its "Position Paper in Education Cooperation," JICA has set out a new vision of "Learning Continuity" for educational cooperation. This emphasizes 1) continuity of comprehensive and coherent support covering all sub-sectors from pre-primary to higher education; 2) continuity from emergency educational support to medium- and long-term development support; and 3) cross-sector synergies. Under this vision, JICA has given priority to the following four areas: 1) quality education for learning improvement; 2) education for fostering equitable and sustainable growth; 3) education for knowledge co-creation in society; and 4) education for building inclusive and peaceful societies.

Based on the changes from the MDGs to the SDGs and on JICA's cooperation policies clarified in the position paper, the characteristics and directions of JICA's future educational cooperation can be summarized as follows:

First, there is a growing demand to respond to diversifying educational development needs. While there is still a great need to improve the quality of basic education, mainly in low-income countries, the development of institutions of higher education is also needed in both middle-income and low-income countries in order to respond to the emerging knowledge-based society and globalization. JICA is also rapidly expanding the cooperation projects to include establishing and strengthening universities, promoting international collaboration, and supporting international students in order to develop high-quality human resources. Furthermore, there is a growing need to support reconstruction in the area of education as well in regions that have experienced conflicts and natural disasters. Different needs require different solutions. Traditional solutions alone cannot appropriately respond to changing needs in time.

Secondly, collaboration and coordination with various actors are becoming more important. In order to respond to the growing and diversified needs in educational development, it is essential to promote collaboration with international organizations, civil society and private sectors and to coordinate activities and divide the work among different actors. Private organizations and enterprises are playing bigger roles in terms of development funds as well as human resources and knowledge. In the case of JICA's educational cooperation projects, too, JICA has also started to explore collaboration with education industries in Japan.

Thirdly, there are increasing similarities between Japan's own challenges and those addressed by the international cooperation projects. In the past, assistance to developing countries was often

regarded as contributing to solving the issues of faraway countries. Recently, however, international cooperation is sometimes directly linked with the Japanese agenda as well. For example, the university network established between Japan and developing countries through international cooperation contributes to the facilitation of the international activities of Japanese universities and promotes their internationalization. Furthermore, Japanese in-service teachers, who have been involved in volunteer activities in developing countries as Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, are contributing to the globalization of school education and local communities in Japan by telling their students about their own experiences in the developing countries they were sent to. There are more commonalities between the agenda of developed countries and those of developing countries. Globalization is required in many areas in Japan, including industry, education, human resources and regional cities. In this situation, Japan's agenda and international cooperation have come closer. In international cooperation, the highest priority must be given to the ownership of developing countries and to their benefit, but, at the same time, Japan should sincerely consider what it can learn from international cooperation.