JICA profile and case study examples for Disasters Avoided

Avoiding economic losses due to disasters is crucial for developing countries to realise sustainable economic development. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) states that governments need to take primary responsibility for this action. Also, the Framework regards international cooperation as imperative for developing countries to overcome the negative spirals that result from disasters. Official Development Assistance (ODA) plays a pivotal role towards supporting developing countries.

There are a number of donor agencies in the world for ODA. Japan's ODA can be bifurcated into bilateral and multilateral assistance. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) [1] is Japan's well-known bilateral donor agency. JICA is the sole implementing agency of bilateral ODA for Japan, providing technical cooperation, grant aid, and ODA loans. JICA has been and continues to be one of the most active in proactive and preventive disaster risk reduction (DRR) among other donor agencies: it has been assessed that the nation of Japan and the World Bank have together contributed more than 50% (USD13.5bn) of total DRR finance through ODA between 1991 and 2010. [2]

JICA continues to place a high priority on proactive and preventive DRR in its work around the world. We believe that to reduce disaster risks requires a focus on two focal areas: (1) avoid creating new disaster risks and (2) reduce existing disaster risks. The first focal area of disaster risk avoidance can be greatly aided by risk-informed land development and control. The second focal area of reducing existing disaster risks is aided by structural measures and, when appropriate, the relocation of assets that are exposed to such risks.

Governments can tackle these challenges by allocating necessary budget and resources and enforcing legal frameworks with good governance.
Non-government agencies do not have a large scale of budget resources and legal power and responsibility to do so. These measures are part of the foundation of a country to ensure the safety of its people and the protection of economic assets that may be harmed by hazards they are exposed to.

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[1] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-co-operation-profiles_04b376d7-en/japan_705ac350-en.html
[2] https://media.odi.org/documents/9473.pdf

With regard to safeguarding people against hazards that may occur, there is no doubt that early warning systems play an important role in saving lives as part of hazard detection and response. Whilst it is of course welcome when early warning systems function properly when a hazard is looming or it occurs as an event, it cannot be said that disaster risk has been reduced if, in recovering afterwards, society returns to the same situation as it was in before the event. This is why we believe that the two factors noted above should be prioritised with the limited budget and resources available to governments. This is a critical matter we want to challenge the international society to focus on. Based on these ideas, JICA's Global Agenda, which is our sectoral policy, has as its prime focus reducing existing disaster risks through the proactive construction and implementation of preventive measures. [3] [4]

Examples of our work around the world

Today, JICA is expanding its ODA practices in many parts of the world, including for flood hazards and landslide hazards, which are sensitive to climate change. We have projects in progress in Asia and also South America which focus on reducing disaster risks in a way that aligns with the two focal points described earlier. In our approach, we firstly formulate master plans that become important blueprint to determine what countermeasures are laid out. Subsequently, we further discuss with our recipient government to the way in which detailed countermeasures are taken. The former interventions- master planning- tend to be implemented through technical cooperation and the latter is executed by means of grant aid and yen loan schemes. Having multiple assistance options unlike other multilateral development banks, JICA has advantages to realise the ideal combination.

Within the context of flood control, JICA has been implementing multiple projects in Indonesia.

For example, after Indonesia experienced a flood along the Citarum River Basin in 1986, JICA provided a technical cooperation, titled "Study on the Flood Control Plan of the Upper Citarum Basin" to formulate a master plan to raise the safety level to 20-year, and implemented several yen loan projects in 1993, 1998, and 2013 to implement prioritised countermeasures.

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[3] global_agenda_20_20.pdf

[4] https://www.jica.go.jp/english/TICAD/overview/publications/global_agenda_20.html

This work helped to reduced inundation areas and water-borne diseases that affect local people.

In another example in Asia, we have carried out a series of linked projects in Pakistan after the devasting 2022 flooding. Dikes have been agreed as important infrastructure to protect land and economic assets along the Indus River. The Pakistani government faces challenges with the maintenance of a dikes network, and JICA has provided technical cooperation to enhance the capacity of local officials by developing standard design and diagnosis guidelines. Based on the agreed project deliverables, JICA has implemented a Grant Aid project to construct enhanced dikes as a pilot and to install a hydrological observation network that can be used as a foundation to design better infrastructure.

As an example of our involvement in South America, the government of Brazil is an important partner with us on the context of landslides. JICA has worked in the field of debris flow since 2013, and JICA is supporting the Brazilian government to develop technical guidelines to reduce disaster risk through the construction of robust sand control dams. Our work supports the Brazilian government's efforts to create an environment for securing the investment required for high quality dam construction.

How we collectively move forward with proactive and preventive DRR

As we move towards 2030 (which is when the Sendai Framework and also the Sustainable Development Goals, known as the SDGs, are due to be updated / modified), the number of cases showing the importance of good proactive and preventive DRR is increasing. However, it remains important to convince many governments to advance ex-ante investment in proactive and preventive DRR measures. Yet without this focus, some disasters will not be avoided, in both developing and developed economies. Many countries are still reactive to disaster events that occur, because government policymakers tend to have less incentive to think about the next potential disaster and a lack of understanding about the full benefits that proactive and preventive DRR provides, with some having a perception that it takes a long time to see the benefits of ex-ante DRR investment. Demonstrating the value of proactive prevention and disaster avoidance, and securing the right investment and undertaking collaborative work to achieve this, should be an enduring goal for us all, and a mindset.

We believe it is the responsibility of governments around the world to avoid disasters. For JICA, Japan's donor agency, we strive to play a pivotal role in encouraging developing countries to prioritise proactive action to avoid disasters, leveraging Japan's domestic experience and lessons learned both nationally and internationally. Each country has different culture, legal framework, and governance systems. For example, the leading agency for flood control is an infrastructure-related ministry in the case of Indonesia, which is called PUPR, while the irrigation-related agency, which is a provincial irrigation department, also plays a pivotal role. Likewise, different institutional backgrounds may have different landscapes for flood control. [5] Rather than insisting on a common approach, it needs to be tailored depending on the context of recipient countries. JICA strives to work in this way in order to make our projects as effective as possible.

[5] https://doi.org/10.20702/iappmjour.19.1_23