

# JICA's Efforts for Strengthening Environmental and Social Monitoring

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## **Abstract**

Environmental and social monitoring is one of the main pillars of JICA's safeguard policy. All JICA-financed projects have to comply with the guideline that requires executing agencies to report monitoring results to JICA, JICA to confirm the monitoring results. Although implementation of large scale infrastructure development projects tend to accompany some risks of environmental and social issues, JICA's overseas offices in collaboration with the headquarters are working together to minimize the negative impacts by facilitating the executing agencies at early stages. In addition, JICA is making efforts in capacity building of executing agencies around the world by providing a variety of practical training programs. Moreover, organizing Advisory Committees and receiving advice from third party experts promote effective monitoring that further reduces the risks of negative impacts. These overall efforts are expected to gradually contribute to strengthening the capacity of the executing agencies to pursue sustainable development in near future.

## **Principles of the JICA Guidelines**

In the year 2010, JICA adopted the "JICA Guidelines for Environmental and Social Considerations (hereinafter referred to as the "JICA Guidelines")" to ensure that its assistance will lead to sustainable development. If a significantly negative impact on the environment or society has been identified during JICA-assisted project planning, JICA will take necessary measures to ensure that appropriate Environmental and Social Considerations will be given. When JICA reviews a project proposal and finds that the project could have a negative impact on the environment or society, JICA advises the project proponents to provide appropriate environmental and social considerations. If the negative impact of the project cannot be avoided or mitigated to an acceptable level, JICA will not support its implementation.

Priority should be given to the avoidance of negative impacts on the environment or

society. Minimization or mitigation of impacts should be considered only if avoidance is not feasible and if the benefit of the project outweighs the cost of mitigation measures. To this end, the project proponents must assess the environmental and social impacts at the earliest possible stage of planning, and implement environmental and social considerations measures in accordance with the JICA Guidelines.

### **JICA's Procedures for Monitoring**

JICA considers environmental and social monitoring as one of the main pillars of the JICA Guidelines. The JICA Guidelines requires executing agencies to report monitoring results to JICA, and it also requires JICA to confirm the monitoring results. If necessary, JICA may request the executing agencies to conduct appropriate actions (e.g. undertake appropriate environmental mitigation measures) in order to alleviate the environmental or social impacts.

There are two major objectives of environmental and social monitoring; one is to evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation measures, and the other is to identify problems/risks as early as possible. Although the executing agencies agree on the necessary procedures on environmental and social considerations, mitigation measures may not function sufficiently in minimizing the environmental impacts. In addition, it is important to recognize the existence of a problem/risk at an early stage, in order to prevent the issue to become serious. Thus, in order to ensure smooth implementation of the project without causing significant negative environmental/social impacts, JICA requires environmental and social monitoring for all the ODA Loan, Grant Aid, and Technical Cooperation projects.

Once the projects are categorized into environmental categories A, B, or FI (Financial Intermediaries), the commitments for monitoring including duration, frequency, monitoring items, standard values, methodology, budget, organization in charge of monitoring shall be agreed between the executing agencies and JICA at the appraisal stage. The executing agencies will be responsible in implementing and supervising monitoring based on the agreement, while they often hire some consultants or NGOs to support their monitoring activities on the ground.

Monitoring is usually conducted not only during construction phase but also during operation phase, which refers to the timing after the construction works are completed, since the environmental and social impacts may differ between the two phases. For the

projects that require land acquisition/resettlement, social monitoring should be started at the early stages of the land acquisition/resettlement. Since the JICA Guidelines stipulate that “host countries must make efforts to enable people affected by projects and to improve their standard of living, income opportunities, and production levels, or at least to restore these to pre-project levels”, JICA often request the executing agencies to continue social monitoring until the timing when we can confirm the status of livelihood recovery.

Monitoring reports are submitted to JICA periodically, usually quarterly during construction phase and semi-annually during operation phase. JICA overseas office and JICA headquarters review the contents of the report and provide comments in order to further improve the reports. In case some issues arise, JICA may provide advice for the executing agencies to properly cope with the issue. If the executing agencies agrees to disclose the monitoring reports, the reports will be disclosed through the JICA website as well as other appropriate means decided by the executing agencies.

### **Efforts for Capacity Building**

In order to strengthen the executing agencies’ capacity on environmental and social monitoring, JICA also puts a high priority on capacity building/training. Every year, we organize two different courses of group trainings, namely “Practice of Environmental and Social Considerations for Investment Project Financing” and “Public Participation, Consensus Building and Resettlement in Public Works Projects“, both mainly targeting the staffs of executing agencies from recipient countries. The courses include lectures and discussions on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement, Natural Habitat, Indigenous peoples, and Monitoring. For example in 2017, 31 participants from more than 10 different countries in Asian, African and Latin American regions joined the two courses. The courses include abundant case studies where participants engage in presentations and discussions, assisting the participants to learn from each other’s opinions and experiences. In addition, field visits to typical infrastructure project sites in Japan (e.g. road, power plant, waste treatment facility etc.) provide good opportunities for them to obtain practical knowledge that can be utilized in the real world.

### **Organizing Advisory Committees**

As for the projects with large impacts that are categorized into category A, JICA seeks advice from an external committee called the “Advisory Committee”, which consists of

independent experts such as university professors/researchers, NGO representatives, and government officers. Their expertise include a wide variety of fields such as natural habitat and biodiversity conservation, pollution and waste management, gender, participatory approach, environmental policy, human rights, etc. The monitoring results of ongoing category A projects should be reported at the Advisory Committee when the construction works are making some progress. This enables each project to periodically review the environmental and social status of the project and to take appropriate measures based on the experts' comments and recommendations.

Though JICA's challenge is still on the way, we believe that our efforts will gradually contribute to strengthening the capacity and implementation structure for environmental and social considerations, enabling each country to pursue sustainable development in near future.

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