

# Informing the Future of Japan's ODA

**Positioning Japan's ODA as a leader in its field**

November 2011

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The Overseas Development Institute, London

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## ACRONYMS

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CICE</b>	Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education
<b>CRS</b>	Creditor Reporting System (an OECD dataset)
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development (UK)
<b>GAVI</b>	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation
<b>GDP / GNI</b>	Gross Domestic Product / Gross National Income
<b>GRIPS</b>	National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (Japan)
<b>HIPC</b>	Highly Indebted Poor Country
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association (World Bank)
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>JOICFP</b>	Japanese Organisation for International Cooperation on Family Planning
<b>LDC</b>	Least Developed Country
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>METI</b>	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Japan)
<b>MIC</b>	Middle Income Country
<b>MoF</b>	Ministry of Finance (Japan)
<b>MoFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
<b>SSR</b>	Security Sector Reform

<b>STEP</b>	Special Terms for Economic Partnership (a type of loan)
<b>TC</b>	Technical Cooperation
<b>TICAD</b>	Tokyo International Conference on African Development
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNTFHS</b>	United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

## PREFACE: Japan at a crossroads

In 1979, Ezra Vogel, a Harvard academic, wrote a book entitled “Japan as Number One: Lessons for America” in which he portrayed Japan, with its strong economy and cohesive society, as the world’s most dynamic industrial nation. Just over three decades later, Japan holds lessons of a less encouraging kind. Its society is growing older at a faster rate than anywhere else in the world. Its position as the second largest economy in the world has been usurped by China many years earlier than had been predicted. And with the rise of the emerging ‘BRIC’ (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies, its influence as the ‘Asian representative’ within high-level international forums is increasingly challenged.

To some extent, these problems have been looming for many decades already, with Japan typically finding it difficult to assert itself on the world stage on a level commensurate with its economic might. Its Official Development Assistance (ODA) has in many ways become Tokyo's main foreign policy tool, utilised as a form of investment, a confidence-building measure, a solution for bilateral problems, a manifestation of economic power and global leadership, and as a tool for buying power and influence in various international organisations. As the 2010 OECD-DAC *Peer Review of Japan* put it, “Japan sees international development cooperation as in its own long-term interests.” The future of Japan’s ODA is therefore an issue of much greater importance than simply maintaining Japan’s national pride in its status as one of the world’s largest bilateral donors – it is a political and economic imperative.

This means that after decades of being broadly acknowledged as the ‘quiet diplomat’ in international affairs, a ‘bridge’ between East and West, Japan is today standing at a political, economic, social and cultural crossroads, with the future of its ODA a critical influence on its compass. A number of interrelated questions are apparent:

- ❖ What are the distinctive characteristics of Japan’s ODA, and can these add value to contemporary development efforts or are they more of an obstacle to effective collaboration and cooperation?
- ❖ Should Japan aim to recapture / pursue a greater role for itself on the international stage, and if so, how might it need to change the way it promotes, allocates and evaluates its ODA accordingly?
- ❖ To what extent is the way Japan views the value of its ODA aligned with the perceptions held by the other major stakeholders in the development field?
- ❖ How can Japan make more effective use of particular topics, countries, programs or learnings within the diverse spread of its ODA to secure greater interest, profile and influence among key external stakeholders?

These questions will be explored throughout this research project, with this report constituting the third in a series that will be made available through the JICA UK website ([www.jica.go.jp/uk/english](http://www.jica.go.jp/uk/english)). I hope you enjoy reading it.

**THOMAS FEENY**  
Senior Programme Officer, JICA UK

## ***About this project***

To help inform discussion of how Japan's ODA might best respond to a rapidly changing development landscape, the UK Office of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has commissioned the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to undertake a three-part research project entitled "Informing the Future of Japan's ODA".

Each phase of the project has its own focus and deliverables, but it is designed to complement and progressively build upon the findings from each stage to make recommendations for JICA about more effective engagement in the future. The first phase of the study examines the history and evolution of Japan's ODA to date, in an effort to extract / identify its contemporary value within an evolving development landscape. The second phase looks at whether the distinctive characteristics of Japan's ODA can be practically applied to meet some of the current and emerging challenges facing African countries and what lessons may emerge for more effective engagement in Africa in the future. The final phase of the project, the findings of which are presented in this report, addresses the question of how Japan can enhance its profile and influence in the development field to remain a leader within an increasingly crowded donor marketplace.

The Terms of Reference for the project can be found in Appendix A.

## ***Phase Three Methodology***

This report was developed on the basis of a limited desk review and a set of interviews.<sup>1</sup> Through this combination of primary and secondary data, and some strategic and conceptual thinking, the ODI team has sought to identify some of the key features of Japan's approach to communication of development issues, and some of the potential lessons or examples from the UK which may be relevant.

However, it is also essential to keep in mind that, given the particular focus of this exercise and the limitations of both time and resources, this report does not constitute an exhaustive, academic treatment of Japanese ODA. Moreover, beyond the literature reviewed by the team, this report relies on the accuracy of information provided by interviewees based on their given perspective and experience. As such, there is an important subjective quality to the analysis presented here, the intention being to highlight perceptions and provoke discussion of key issues rather than to draw concrete, objective conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> See the list of Interviewees at the end of this Report for further details of contributing individuals.

# 1. Introduction

This report examines how Japan might enhance its profile and influence in the development field, with a particular focus on achieving this within the UK context. It is part of a wider research project, commissioned by the UK Office of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) entitled “Informing the Future of Japan’s ODA”.

Earlier phases of this research examined the history and evolution of Japan’s ODA to date, in an effort to identify its contemporary value within an evolving development landscape. They have also explored Japan’s ODA to Africa and the lessons for more effective engagement in Africa in the future (Rocha Menocal et al 2011; Wild et al 2011). This report, for the final phase of the project, addresses how Japan can enhance its profile and influence in the development field to remain a leader within an increasingly crowded donor marketplace.

There is limited available literature and analysis on Japan’s role as an influencer – indeed, how donor agencies and governments influence policy debates and communicate effectively remains an under-studied area in general in the field of development. This report therefore relies on the findings from Phases One and Two of this study, a review of those documents which are available and a series of interviews. It examines some of the common perceptions that UK stakeholders hold of Japan as a donor, and what might explain these perceptions. Drawing on the experience and approach of UK stakeholders in particular to policy influencing and communication, it explores some potential lessons, as well as importance differences, in relation to Japan before setting out a series of recommendations going forward.

It is important to acknowledge that the level of knowledge and understanding of Japan’s approach to ODA and the models/modalities it uses varies considerably. For example, this research indicates low levels of awareness within the UK and among some Western donors and OECD-DAC members more broadly, but this should not be confused with the suggestion that Japan’s ODA is not therefore well known at the *global* level (given that it has enjoyed a very high profile among East Asian countries for many decades). This is an important point to make, because the perspectives of Western donors are often wrongly conflated as representing ‘global’ views due to their dominant influence in this field.

Cognisant of these issues, what emerges from this research is the overarching view that very little is known or understood about Japan’s approach to ODA and its models/modalities, within the UK and arguably more broadly. As with the first two reports in this series, this report purposefully focuses on capturing the perceptions of ‘outsiders’ – in this instance, mainly UK stakeholders. The point of this report is not, however, to define an objective ‘truth’ or reality regarding Japan’s ODA (if such a thing exists), nor to attempt to balance Western/UK perceptions with Japanese ‘truths’, which are themselves contextually and culturally grounded. Rather, it is intended to illustrate (a) that such gaps in knowledge and understanding exist; and (b) that there is value for all parties in first recognising these gaps and then seeking to lessen them through improved communication and dialogue.

For example, it appears from this research that while Japan has the experience and potential to make a key contribution to a number of current development debates, in the UK and elsewhere, it does not appear to be capitalising on these. Addressing this will not only require strengthening Japanese policy engagement at an international level, but also identifying realistic expectations for how the work of JICA is communicated and promoted within the UK.



## 2. Perceptions of Japan: From the outside looking in

### 2.1) *Common perceptions of Japan*

The predominant view from across a range of relevant stakeholders and from available analysis suggests that very little is known or understood about the Japanese approach to ODA. There is little awareness, for example, of how Japanese aid has evolved over time and particularly since the 2003 ODA Charter and subsequent reforms. This is surprising, given Japan's relative size as a donor and its long term membership of the OECD DAC, as well as growing links with newer or emerging donors. It is also surprising given the relatively well-informed development communities within the UK. This lack of awareness has contributed to a sense of Japan 'punching below its weight' in international development policy debates.

Where there is some awareness of Japan's approach and role as a donor, it tends to emphasise Japan's technical engagement in specific sectors (infrastructure, agriculture). Interviews suggest Japan is viewed as operating very much at the micro level – engaged in specific projects at sub-national levels. This is reportedly seen as being of limited interest to a wider development audience, who are more interested in methods of scaling up results. Moreover, and not uncommon to other donors, Japan is viewed as having a preference for projects which are highly visible and which have the 'Japan' stamp on them, thus deterring multilateral efforts with other donors that may help to boost knowledge of Japan's development model and systems (Court 2005).

One area commonly recognised is Japan's 'insider/outsider' status within international fora such as the OECD DAC, and Japan's perceived reluctance to embrace the principles set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The issue appears not that Japan should have no objections to the Paris agenda, but that it has not been seen to use its dissenting voice effectively. While there may be areas of common concern, for example around new aid modalities or how the good governance agenda has been supported, Japan is not seen as having made its arguments forcefully or clearly, undermining the ability of others to engage with them (see also Court 2005; Rocha Menocal et al 2011). This is a powerful example of how limitations around how Japan communicates – rather than the content of the message itself - have led to confusion and misconceptions around Japan's ODA within the broader development community.

In addition, Japan is largely seen as a marginal actor in sub-Saharan Africa – a significant area of UK and European aid and development efforts – which also weakens the areas of shared experience with these stakeholders (Tembo et al 2008; Court 2005). Parallels are drawn between China's significant engagement and profile on the continent, which in practice far outweighs Japan's. Some interest is voiced in relation to Japan's potential role in brokering experience from East Asia to Africa, but questions are also raised as to how carefully these lessons are translated and adapted to African contexts (Court 2005: 29; GRIPS Development Forum 2008: 11-12; Wild et al 2011).

Interviews with those with some knowledge of Japan and JICA reveal the perception that some of the strengths of Japan's ODA go unrecognised at both the national and the international level beyond a small set of involved stakeholders. Earlier phases in this research project set out what some of these distinctive strengths might be, such as Japan's long term engagement, empathic approach and field level experience (Rocha Menocal et al 2011; Wild et al 2011; see also Tembo et al 2008; GRIPS Development Forum 2008). Again, a lack of understanding of these distinctive strengths is seen as undermining Japan's ability to make an effective contribution to a number of key development debates.

One aspect emphasised by those who have interacted with JICA and with the Japanese aid system are the bureaucratic processes involved in decision making, which reportedly lead to long timelines for responses and multiple layers of decision making (see also Arase 2005). Furthermore, in the absence of continuous, clear communication, there is common recourse to areas of known criticism of Japanese aid approaches (including high levels of tied aid, links to commercial interests, use of loans) but with very little understanding of how Japan's models might be changing or adapting to different circumstances.

## **2.2) Examining perceptions and realities**

As indicated above, there are examples where there are apparent gaps between the perceptions of Japan as a donor and realities of how it operates on the ground. For example, there is limited awareness of Japan's widening engagement with other sectors (such as basic services) or of the loan to grant ratios in Africa as opposed to Asia. Recent reforms of the Japanese aid system (such as the new JICA) are also not identified.

However, in many ways the more significant finding from this brief review is the extent to which very little is known about Japan's ODA *at all* outside of Japan itself. There is little recognition of its distinctive approaches and strengths and of where it might add value to the wider aid system. Despite its significant size as a donor (although this has declined with budget cuts in recent years) and its long term experience, it is not seen as having realised its potential as an 'influencer' in development policy debates and practice.

These perceptions or lack of awareness may reflect elements of stereotyping or the prejudices of external stakeholders themselves. Language also remains a key barrier, as many external stakeholders may have limited Japanese language skills and may lack an understanding of the Japanese context and system for development cooperation<sup>2</sup>. This study was not able to uncover all of these dimensions, but undoubtedly there is much room for improvement in building the awareness and openness of a range of external stakeholders, including within the UK, to Japanese principles and approaches.

### *Key features of the Japanese aid system*

Interviewees and available literature also point to some underlying features of the Japanese aid system and at the different levels of engagement (domestic, international, field level) which help to explain the lack of awareness around the Japanese approach. One commonly emphasised challenge for effectively positioning JICA and Japanese development is the reported lack of political will or leadership on these issues within Japan. As a GRIPS report notes: "Unlike the UK, the recent prime ministers of Japan have had no personal interest in projecting the ODA agenda domestically or internationally. The Diet plays a limited role in policy debates and decision-making on aid. Japan does not have a basic law on aid, and until recently there was little regular oversight of foreign aid on the part of the Diet"<sup>3</sup> (GRIPS 2008: 21-23).

In general, as highlighted in earlier phases of this work, Japanese leaders and politicians have tended to view development assistance as a diplomatic or strategic asset rather than a vision to be pursued in its own right. This has been reinforced where there has been a high

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<sup>2</sup> Other non-English speaking countries, such as Sweden, have translated a wide range of reports into English and this has increased awareness and familiarity with their approach in countries like the UK. However, some donor countries (such as France) have not taken this approach, and again this has shaped the levels of awareness in part as result.

<sup>3</sup> The National Diet of Japan is Japan's bicameral legislature.

turnover of Prime Ministers and reports of a decreasing capacity of major political parties within Japan. This lack of political will is reflected in the realities of a shrinking Japanese aid budget. According to interviews, it may also be affected by Japan's own economic context and recent experience of natural disasters (namely the 2011 earthquake and tsunami) which may contribute to focusing public opinion and political attention on domestic rather than international concerns.

Furthermore, some argue that this reflects cultural differences, particularly in terms of Japanese political culture which has been characterised as more 'top down' and less focused on engagement with civil society, public opinion and the media, at home and abroad. According to this view, Japanese culture and ways of interaction do not easily lend themselves to 'banging your own drum' or publicising Japanese views and agendas. This has led to more reactive stances, for example from JICA (GRIPS 2008: 21-22).

However, as GRIPS highlights, this is not necessarily a negative quality: "By being less assertive, Japan can conduct interactive policy dialogues with developing countries in a way that bolsters their national pride and strengthens mutual trust" (Ibid.). Yet there is a sense that within a forum like the OECD DAC or in its field level engagement, it may help to explain the perception that Japan has not well communicated its model and approach to date. Although JICA has sought to engage more openly with its own citizens through initiatives such as the JICA Global Plazas, this engagement is similarly viewed as having been unsuccessful in prompting dialogue on Japan's ODA in that it is seen to impart information in a largely one-way direction.

The first part of this research project also highlighted issues rooted in the nature of the Japanese bureaucracy and the institutional divisions that can exist within and between the Japanese aid system (Rocha Menocal et al 2011). Some argue that the Japanese system is very centralised, which can undermine its flexibility and ability to engage proactively with issues of policy influence and communication (Arase 2010). Others pointed to the shared mandates, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) retaining the overall decision making and policy mandate with JICA as a technical agency or implementer – and often much closer to policy discussions and technicalities (particularly at field level).

This leads to a more fragmented context for policy engagement:

"Japan's fragmented ODA decision-making inhibits coherent policy formulation and implementation. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is the lead ODA ministry, in reality, the planning and implementation of ODA policy and budget are scattered across many organisations, including the Ministry of Finance (MOF), the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), [and] the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) ... Moreover, more than a dozen "domestic" ministries also partake in providing ODA with limited scope and budget, and their activities are not necessarily reported to MOFA or integrated with the rest of ODA" (GRIPS 2008: 21-23).

A range of interviewees argued that this has led to a disjuncture, whereby JICA staff have lacked policy expertise and a strategic planning function or mandate and have therefore been unable to capitalise on some of the field experience that they hold.

### *Domestic support for development*

At the domestic level, within Japan, there is an ongoing perception of a lack of communication with the Japanese public or ongoing lack of public engagement with these issues – although this is something JICA is aiming to address, as set out in its 2010 White Paper (JICA 2010). However, this is not particular to Japan - the average person in the UK, for example, has a very low level of awareness of the UK's aid agency and the models and approaches it uses for development assistance (something the UK has also sought to respond to in recent years, including through re-branding using the UKAid logo).

Nevertheless, Japan reportedly lacks a strong domestic constituency in favour of development, in contrast to a country like the UK (which we discuss below). In relation to Africa, for example, Japanese civil society and media provide limited information on Africa, in part due to its perceived remoteness. As a result, African needs are not well known or publicised and there is little political momentum to push for more aid to Africa (Tembo et al 2008). However, it should be noted that there are examples of activism of different non-state actors within Japan on these issues. In the 1980s, for example, Japanese civil society lobbied the government to provide assistance to those suffering from famine in East Africa, and Japanese civil society was seen as a key agitator on this issue before civil society in many Western countries (Sato 2010: 15-16). This highlights an area where differences in the approach and relationships between the state and non-state groups may be misunderstood by those outside of Japan.

Under the leadership of JICA's current President, Madame Ogata, issues of public communication and greater engagement with the media have been emphasised (JICA 2010). Madame Ogata is reportedly committed to building JICA's profile and has been an important champion internationally. A number of recent reforms have sought to strengthen public engagement, including a recent interactive initiative aimed at domestic audiences, the 'Nantoka-shinakya! Project'.<sup>4</sup> However, the Media Division within JICA remains relatively small and it is staffed by bureaucrats (on rotation from other departments) rather than media professionals (in contrast to some other donor agencies). This may have contributed to a lack of expertise in communications and media strategy, and a potential lack of professional incentives to perform well in this area.

In general, and in common with many other donors and government departments, it can be challenging for JICA staff to see the value of communication and public relations and this is perceived as translating into defensive or reactive communications approaches. For example, there has reportedly been limited investment in Japan's online communication and the websites of JICA field offices, although efforts have been made to improve the English and French versions more recently (JICA 2010). Moreover, the OECD Peer Review (2010) noted that Japan could improve its monitoring and evaluation, while interviewees in general highlighted a lack of investment in the generation of lessons learned from Japanese ODA.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://nantokashinakya.jp/>

### **2.3) Implications for JICA's policy influence**

These domestic patterns have implications for different levels of communication and different aspects of policy influence. Overall, what emerges is a sense that JICA (and the Japanese aid system in general) could make more progress on developing the evidence-base for the models and experience it uses, or could better share and communicate such evidence and analysis among a broader audience (including not only other donors but also civil society, research communities, media organisations and others), both within and outside Japan. A prime example of this is Japan's approach to translating lessons from the East Asian development experience to Africa, which reportedly shapes much of its development support to African countries but which has not been well articulated, in terms of the key elements and distinctive features of these lessons (see Wild et al 2011).

Within Japan, JICA public relations activities are reportedly attempting to increase their engagement with the public. However, progress on these has reportedly been slow and in general reforms as seen as requiring the proactive engagement of citizens (for example to visit a website or hub). Given the low levels of public interest in international development in general, and within Japan specifically, such initiatives are not likely to significantly improve public awareness of Japan's aid. While it is beyond the scope of this report, a more appropriate strategy may be to focus on those who already have some interest or expertise in development. For example, DFID is very well known among the development community within the UK (and internationally) rather than in terms of general public opinion.

At the international level, Japan remains one of the largest contributors to the OECD DAC, as well as a key regional player within Asia, and interviewees argue that as result it should have a bigger voice on development issues. Some point to challenges where Japan is not perceived to promote its views as actively as others, such as the UK (again, this is discussed further below).

Significantly, the first two phases of this research project highlighted a number of live development debates where Japanese experience and distinctive strengths could usefully be brought to bear but where their approach and perspectives are currently not well known (Rocha Menocal et al 2011; Wild et al 2011). At a time when a wide number of donors are reflecting on their approaches, and when the approaches set out by the OECD DAC as well as by emerging powers are increasingly scrutinised, there is great opportunity for Japan to offer a distinctive perspective on these debates. Moreover, a number of other donors have also operated outside of the traditional 'international community' (including the US but also more recently, South Korea, Brazil and others) – strategic alliances and relationships with these actors would also help increase Japan's own profile and influence (Wild et al 2011).

At the field level, numerous interviewees cited perceptions of an unrealised Japanese contribution to national policy discussions, where Japan's field level experience in implementation could be brought to bear (Wild et al 2011). JICA programmes and experts are recognised as having particular strengths at the field or community level, particularly in terms of their in-depth implementation experience but they are seen as less strong in communicating this up to policy and national levels. A presentation by Professor Yoshida, for example, argues that in the education sector, Japan has rich field experience in specific and concrete issues but that they are not translating these systematically into policy messages - and that capacity building is needed within JICA to address this (Yoshida 2011).

This point has also been highlighted by GRIPS research, which emphasises that the expertise of Japanese experts is not always being translated into Japanese policy engagement:

“A good Japanese expert would live in the field for years, speak the local language, become immersed in local customs, and share frustration and hardship with local counterparts before drafting a proposal. Such an expert would not give general advice upon the first visit to the country. This type of comprehensive intellectual engagement is lacking in countries where government officials are too busy attending workshops and symposiums offered by temporary visitors” (GRIPS 2008: 16).

This form of policy engagement should not be restricted to bilateral partners, but could also include collaboration and engagement with multilateral agencies and international NGOs, where relevant.

These dynamics point to the need to ground any strategy for policy influencing in Japan’s own institutions, political processes and realities. However, there may be interesting lessons and points of comparison with the experiences of others. The UK, for example is recognised as an effective influencer in development debates. In the following section we therefore reflect on some of the UK’s experiences and what might be of relevance to Japan (and particularly to the UK Office of JICA).

### 3. Spotlight on the UK: Building profile and influencing others

#### 3.1) DFID’s approach to communication

The key pillars of the UK’s approach to communication and building influence were set out shortly after the creation of DFID, in the ‘Building Support for Development Strategy’ (Short 1997). The key aspects of this policy are set out in Box 1 below:

##### **Box 1: The UK’s Building Support for Development Strategy**

The 1997 Building Support for Development Strategy set out the following key pillars for the UK:

- Formal education – incorporation of global issues into national Curriculum provision and guidance across the UK.
- Working with the media – in relation to specific issues/themes
- Links to non-state actors (including NGOs, faith based groups, trade unions, private sector)

This strategy, and its emphasis on building support within the UK and internationally, led to significant financial investments. For example, DFID spent £45.6 million directly on projects based within the UK between 2005-2010, with almost half of that – £22.7 million – spent on the Development Awareness Fund, a fund for "projects which raise awareness and understanding of global poverty and how it can be reduced".

### *The Coalition government*

The election of a new government in 2010, with representation from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, as well as the UK's own period of financial austerity, have contributed to some change in approach. As a result, the Development Awareness Fund has been phased out and spending on UK projects significantly reduced. However, in recognition of the importance of evidence but also the ability of DFID to shape policy agendas, there is ongoing investment in research through DFID's Research and Evidence Division. In 2010, DFID doubled its investment in research to £220 million a year with more than £1 billion to be spent on research and partnerships from 2011-2015.

According to interviews, the change of government also contributed to a 'refresh' in its approach to media and communications, including an update to its Communications Strategy. The new strategy is aligned with the Government's approach to development, with its emphasis on results and value for money for British taxpayers (see Box 2). As Box 2 demonstrates, a key feature of DFID's communications approach has focused on working in partnership with other stakeholders, something we return to in the Recommendations section below.

#### **Box 2: DFID Communications: A changed approach?**

DFID's communications approach can be characterised as offering a series of stories of what British aid is achieving in different countries. In recent years, it has also sought to improve the coherence and strategic quality of communications, and DFID's Communications team state that they hold regular meetings on strategy, including how to engage with the media but also with Ministers and politicians, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders.

DFID reports that it increasingly seeks to concentrate on key priorities and to capitalise on 'moments of opportunity'. Two examples cited were the communications and engagement efforts DFID undertook in the lead up to the Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Reviews (launched in March 2011) and the latest Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) conference co-hosted by the UK. The former reportedly demonstrated the importance of prior preparation and sustained communication with key stakeholders, including Ministers and MPs, civil society organisations, and the media before release. For the latter, again there was emphasis on work with a variety of partners (GAVI, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Save the Children) to ensure coordinated media strategies and to increase influence.

DFID has also engaged with forms of new and social media, including a blog on its homepage, which profiles the views of country offices but has also included external commentators (such as Bill Gates) who are invited to contribute to the blog on a regular basis. Furthermore, DFID often works with a variety of stakeholders to communicate its messages, including faith groups.

Moreover, DFID has worked with international journalists and with those based in the countries in which DFID operates, including inviting them to see DFID projects. DFID has also embedded journalists in UK relief and aid efforts to give them a first-hand taste of the work involved. In addition, to sustain media interest in the UK at the local level, DFID has spearheaded an initiative called "Hometown", whereby stories about the kind of work that DFID staff are doing abroad are featured in local media outlets back home in the UK.



As noted above, in response to perceptions of increased scepticism within the media and within public opinion, DFID and the Secretary of State for International Development have increasingly sought to emphasise issues of results, value for money and transparency (Lockwood 2010). Over the past few years, DFID has also engaged in sustained efforts to move from a reactive to a more proactive engagement with the media (with the Secretary himself maintaining a relatively high media profile). This has been reflected in the increasing amount and tone of coverage received.

At the same time, wider stakeholders continue to feel that DFID's communications strategy remains weak in some areas. For instance, interviewees described its media engagement as 'cautious' and 'reactive', and suggested that the Department has had to work hard to attract media attention (particularly positive media attention at a time of increased scrutiny where the aid budget has been ring fenced but there are large scale spending cuts in other public sectors). In addition, while the programmatic aid budget was ring-fenced, administrative budgets have been cut across the whole of government and this has reduced DFID's budget for communications, alongside a communications freeze across government which does not allow the hiring of consultants or commissioning of work and advice.

Moreover, in part some of the challenges DFID faces in communicating its messages reflect the highly sophisticated media market within the UK. For development issues, there remains limited coverage of aid *per se*, but some internal events (such as the ring-fencing of the development budget at a time of widespread cuts and changes in development policy) and international developments (including war, famine and political events) can generate increased attention, controversy and/or debate, and as such gain coverage in the mainstream television and print media. Alongside this, there is an increasingly diverse online media, with online platforms such as openDemocracy addressing a range of UK and international issues, while there is a proliferation of blogs and new social media, led either by mainstream media (such as the online Guardian Development pages) or by opinion formers in the development research policy spheres.<sup>5</sup>

This has contributed to a diverse yet segmented media audience that is increasingly selective about where it gets its news and information from. It also means that any organisation has to work hard to gain coverage, and needs to link its work to current affairs and 'hot topics' as well as working with both established or traditional media and newer forms of social media, which, as discussed above, reflects some of the recent approaches of DFID.

### ***3.2) Factors which shape DFID's approach***

What emerges strongly from interviews and from relevant available analysis is that the UK has often focused on its role as an 'influencer', working through partnership with key stakeholders, emphasising the uptake of its policy messages rather than attempting to significantly shift public opinion or attract significant media attention for its operations. A number of factors are thought to shape DFID's approach in this respect. For the purposes of this report, we highlight three key aspects, namely the presence of political leadership; the use of strategic partnerships and investments in research and evidence building; and its international leadership on specific issues.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example the blogs of: The Overseas Development Institute; Duncan Green of Oxfam; Lawrence Haddad of IDS; and Owen Barder.



Turning first to political leadership, DFID is seen to have been effective at influencing development debates in part because of the politics around development within the UK, reflected in the cross party consensus which now exists for development. As Hudson and Jonsson (2009) note:

“Since the election of a Labour Government in 1997, successive Prime Ministers – Tony Blair and Gordon Brown – have had a strong personal commitment to global poverty reduction. Through their leadership and the work of a well-organised and influential NGO lobby, considerable public support for the UK’s programme of development assistance has been built and maintained”.

The creation of a separate aid agency, led by a Cabinet Minister, has further established DFID’s mandate and remit in this respect. It has also reportedly given DFID a greater remit to seek to influence others.

This is markedly different to the Japanese context where there is an identified lack of political leadership and interest in development cooperation. This means that any examples or lessons from the UK experience need to be appropriately adapted to the very different set of circumstances and institutions of the Japanese aid architecture.

Secondly, the UK has made good use of strategic partnerships with others, particularly NGOs as well as research institutes and centres. This has been supported through DFID’s internal capacity, including its Policy Division and Research and Evidence Division, based in London. A prime example is illustrated in 2008’s Make Poverty History campaign (Box 3).

**Box 3: The Make Poverty History campaign in the UK**

The Make Poverty History campaign has been one of the largest in the UK’s history. Mobilising around the 2008 G8 Summit, it focused on three issues – aid, debt and trade. The Make Poverty History coalition eventually encompassed hundreds of organisations and community groups, but at its core, it was led by the biggest international charities based in the UK (including Oxfam). It also reflected strong relationships between organisations and the UK government. As Glennie notes: “When the Make Poverty History manifesto had already been signed off and was going to press, a call from one of Gordon Brown’s senior advisers led to last-minute changes”, something which Glennie argues was “an early sign that somehow British aid charities had found themselves in the unusual position of launching a huge campaign calling for policies the government was already planning to announce” (2008: 116-7).

This collaboration formed part of a wider UK government strategy to build support for aid increases, through working with NGOs, producing and collaborating in analysis that showed the effectiveness of aid in reducing poverty, and which culminated in the 2005 report of the Africa Commission (Ibid.)

Subsequent analysis has highlighted some of the challenges of the Make Poverty History campaign, including the extent to which it simplified the complexities of aid investment and development progress (see also Glennie 2008). But there is no ignoring the effectiveness of this approach for gaining wider attention and for influencing the policy debate. As Hudson and Jonsson (2009) note:

“Perhaps the key constituency for international development in the UK is that of civil society, with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) the most influential element of that. NGOs such as Oxfam, Action Aid, Christian Aid, World Vision, War on Want and the World Development Movement have for many years played an important role in informing UK policy and practice and helping to build public support for international development”.

Moreover, aside from large scale campaigns, there are a wide range of mechanisms through which DFID engages with NGOs, ranging from formal consultations on White Papers, to less formal discussions about DFID's policies in relation to particular issues or countries, to informal networks of people with shared interests in issues and events. In terms of funding, in 2008/09 more than 5% of total DFID spending was channelled through UK-based civil society organizations. As mentioned above, DFID also commissions large amounts of research, including funding a number of Development Research Centres at institutions like the London School of Economics and the University of Sussex, and has established a number of Research Programme Consortia which invest considerable time (five years) in studying particular topics in-depth.

This again represents a very different context to that in Japan, where there is not the same level of domestic interest in development nor similar relationships between the government and non-state actors. However, this does not mean that there is no domestic constituency for development. Warrener notes, for instance, that there are a number of university programmes and think tanks in Japan devoted to studying development issues that could be engaged (Warrener 2004). This also has some important implications for JICA's UK Office, in terms of the potential for strategic partnerships and collaboration within the UK to build awareness of Japan's work and to increase JICA's potential to influence current policy debates, as well as to strengthen links between Japanese and UK constituencies for development.

Thirdly, DFID has prioritised positioning itself at the 'cutting edge' or forefront of specific development issues. This is demonstrated by the UK's work on Africa – which was made a priority of the Gleneagles G8 Summit and through the then Prime Minister Tony Blair's Africa Commission. Another useful example is the UK's prominent role within the OECD DAC on issues of Security Sector Reform (SSR) (see Box 4).

It is worth noting that DFID's decentralised structure provides scope for relatively flexible policy engagement by Country Offices. In general, and in line with DFID's overall commitments, it has tended to prioritise engagement in national policy debates (for example, adopting leadership roles in relevant budget support fora or sector working groups) which prioritises working with other, like minded donors. At the same time, the UK's own public pressures are also contributing to greater emphasis on making UK visible (which contributed to the 2010 launch of the 'UKAid' logo, as a response to the lack of awareness of the DFID brand).

**Box 4: DFID's lead role in putting SSR on the agenda** (adapted from Albrecht et al 2010: 74-78)

DFID has played a lead role in putting SSR on the development agenda through a recognition in both policy and programming of the interconnected nature of security and development and the willingness to promote this issue in international fora. The emergence of SSR as a development priority is often attributed to a speech given in March 1999 by then UK secretary of state for International Development, Clare Short, at King's College London, in which she laid out the importance of engaging the security sector in order to achieve sustainable development. The SSR concept was further refined within DFID policy and in DFID programming in Sierra Leone and Uganda. DFID's experience with SSR has been controversial within the organisation itself; however it has benefitted from a small cadre of staff committed to promoting the connections between security and development. Through its engagement in international forums and through research and advocacy, DFID's in-house SSR experience, has been instrumental in shaping SSR-related thinking at the global level. SSR has since been multilateralised, first by expanding to other OECD DAC countries (the Netherlands and Germany), then within the framework of the OECD DAC (and a publication of a Guidance Note on SSR) and finally within the multilateral frameworks of the European Union (EU) and the UN.

## 4. Implications for JICA / Communications Strategy<sup>6</sup>

Current Japanese policies recognise the issues and challenges referred to above. The 2010 White Paper, for example, recognises that public support is crucial for development assistance and sets out two key pillars for JICA's work, 'public participation' in development cooperation and 'increasing the visibility' of ODA. This White Paper also commits JICA to "...continue to reinforce its analytical and conceptual abilities, develop its implementation capacity, and ensure the efficient implementation" of its projects. The new JICA Research Institute is referenced as an important resource for reflecting on models of Japanese assistance. Within the JICA UK Office, there is also evidence of a prioritisation of its engagement and communication activities, including the use of a Public Relations consultancy to advise on UK press and public relations strategy.

In light of this commitment to strengthening and building JICA's policy and communications approaches, there appear to be a number of options for future strategy, particularly for the UK Office. These include:

- Identify your audience – and adapt strategies accordingly

A first key priority must be to clearly articulate what the JICA UK Office wants to communicate, for what purpose, and for whom. Disaggregating discussions of communications and policy influence by levels – for example, the domestic, international and field level – is one aspect of this, but it also requires defining the overall objective for communication. This would include whether the aim is to build greater public support (targeting general public opinion) or to influence key policy makers and the development community. This could also apply to broader JICA public engagement.

- Define realistic expectations

This is particularly true in terms of press coverage. As one journalist noted, 'an aid project to Africa is not news' and when operating in the UK's sophisticated media market, there needs to be a realistic appraisal as to how much press attention JICA is likely to generate. Journalists are reportedly 'not interested' in Japan's policies (or those of any other donor) but rather, they are interested in human stories and topical issues.

This does not mean there are no opportunities for press coverage. The drought crisis in the Horn of Africa, for example, has received significant press attention in UK television, radio and print media in 2011. Moreover, one of JICA's largest field offices is in Kenya. This would be a possible entry point for media attention, although it would require adapting information about Japan's support in the region to this current focus of interest. It would also require greater links between JICA's UK Office and field offices such as those in Kenya. There could potentially be a role for the JICA Research Institute in this respect, if it was able to adopt a more 'think tank' role and disseminate lessons, examples and reports from Japan on topical international development issues.

Interviews suggest that where the JICA UK office would like to attract greater media coverage, it will need to respond in a timely way to breaking stories (such as the drought crisis), and to draw on media expertise (in addition to public relations expertise) to identify what journalists are looking for.

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<sup>6</sup> These proposals are focused on the JICA UK Office, which has been the principal contact for this research, but hopefully they also have relevance for other parts of JICA.

Here it is important to note that, as discussed above, JICA is not unique in struggling to attract press coverage of its work. DFID is not always seen as effective in its media engagement, with a tendency towards responsive or reactive strategies rather than setting the news agenda. It has also attracted negative press – particularly where there are questions on decisions to ring-fence the aid budget or accusations of corruption or aid scandals – which reflects the extent to which agencies cannot control the news. If JICA does seek greater media coverage, it will need to accept that some of this might not necessarily be positive, particularly in the current financial climate.

- Build strategic partnerships

A more realistic expectation for JICA, and particularly for the JICA Office, may be to seek to influence the existing development communities (for example within the UK). This is more likely to have impact than broad attempts to garner press attention and wider public engagement.

In this respect, a key lesson from DFID's own experience is the importance of building strategic partnerships with NGOs and research institutes. At present, there is limited awareness within these organisations of Japan as a donor and of JICA specifically. However, there are a number of development policy debates these organisations are engaged where Japan potentially has a distinctive contribution to make.

As set out in earlier phases of this research, these include debates on the relationship between governance and growth (including the lessons from East Asia) and discussions on the need to link policy frameworks and engagement to the realities of incentives at local levels (for example, in relation to service delivery). Japan's own experiences as an effective implementer and in seeking to translate Asian lessons for Africa overlap significantly with these issues and could be well received.

This again requires some flexibility, in identifying current debates and topical issues and adapting or presenting Japanese ideas, values and models in relation to these issues. There would also be scope to capitalise on ongoing and significant UK interest in the role of China as a donor (particularly in Africa) – which is closely followed within the NGO and research communities. While this remains politically sensitive for Japan, offering an example of an Asian donor with a different model to China could be well received.

A complementary strategy would be to identify and build relationships with key 'opinion formers' within the UK development sphere. For example, a number of prominent commentators (from ODI, IDS and from large NGOs) regularly write their own blogs or contribute to online media such as the Guardian's online Development section (including the Poverty Matters blog). As a starting point, an engagement strategy could focus on those with shared perspectives, for example on the issues of governance/growth discussed above, to build an ongoing dialogue which might then be picked up and discussed in policy debates by these opinion formers.

- Invest in policy expertise

Another key lesson from the UK experience is the value of recording lessons of past experience (both good and bad) and sharing with others. Offering fresh analysis and insights into projects and country engagement helps build an agency's policy profile and credibility.

Again, this could usefully focus on a number of key entry point issues and areas, reflecting Japan's identified value added. It could involve support for research and policy analysis to support and better understand these areas of value added (and could involve building on, or

collaborating with, Japanese research institutes such as GRIPS, Institute of Development Economics (IDE), other university institutes or the JICA Research Institute) as well as the use of events and seminars to help build greater UK-Japan awareness on these entry points.

One common challenge, identified in the relevant literature and through interviews, is JICA's lack of policy expertise internally and its limited mandate to engage on policy issues. It may be helpful to better define the respective responsibilities of different components of the Japanese aid system (including MoFA and JICA) and to increase the scope of JICA officials to present and utilise their field level experience. The UK office could play a key role in this respect, in terms of brokering field experience in developing countries (through links with other JICA offices) and translating them into wider policy debates.

While attempts have been made under the leadership of Madame Ogata to more clearly set out the strategic and overarching policy objectives for development support (see the ODA Charter, recent White Papers), interviewees stress the need to invest more in crystallising and communicating the overall models that Japan adopts. The earlier phases of this research could potentially form the basis of this, particularly as a resource for the JICA UK Office to draw upon and disseminate.

- Identify opportunities to collaboratively address shared problems and concerns

Finally, there seems to be shared ground for JICA with a donor like the UK, which is not currently being capitalised on. While JICA and DFID commonly utilise different modalities and approaches to development assistance, they both are increasingly having to grapple with potential sceptical publics and challenges of how to secure public support for development at a time of financial crisis. On an operational level, this may open up opportunities for much greater sharing of experiences and lessons between DFID and JICA on how to address public engagement effectively.

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## APPENDIX A: Project Terms of Reference

### PART ONE – Locating Japan’s ODA within a crowded, shifting marketplace

This part examines the history and evolution of Japan’s ODA to date, in an effort to extract / identify its contemporary value within a rapidly changing development landscape. The major question it seeks to answer is:

- What is the value add of Japan’s development model compared with other major donors?

Answering this question will involve answering a number of more focused ‘minor’ questions, including:

1. What do we mean by a development ‘model’ or approach and how does it relate to a country’s ODA policy?
2. What are the most common characteristics of development models shared across the donor community?
3. What are the defining features of Japan’s contemporary ODA /development model, and how / why have these changed over the last few decades?
4. What is the relation between Japan’s ODA and Japanese culture, and what implications might this have for the former’s propensity for change?
5. Who are the most comparable donor agencies to JICA in terms of their development model / ODA policy, and who are the most different?
6. How is Japan’s ODA currently viewed / appreciated by other key stakeholders (e.g. donors, western media, international NGOs), as compared with their closest counterparts?
7. How will Japan’s ODA and/or development model be affected by the rise of Brazil, Russia, India and particularly China as emerging economies / donors?

This element of the research is designed to *raise awareness* about the history and contemporary value of Japan’s ODA, and will target audiences including:

- Japanese Government - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- JICA HQ
- JICA Overseas Offices
- Other Bilateral and Multilateral Donors / Government Agencies
- International NGOs
- United Nations Agencies
- Japanese Embassies
- Japanese & Foreign Media / Academic Institutions

It is anticipated that the methodology supporting this element of the project will include desk research (e.g. comparing OECD DAC Peer Reviews), telephone / face-to-face interviews with academics and officials, and case studies / success stories from JICA’s information database.



## **PART TWO – Applying the strengths of Japan’s ODA within an African context**

This part examines how the distinctive value of Japan’s ODA can be practically applied to meet some of the contemporary and emerging challenges facing African countries. The major question it seeks to answer is:

- What has been the value add of Japan’s contribution to African development to date, and what areas, issues, populations or programs should it concentrate on going forward in cooperating effectively with other key stakeholders?

Answering this question will involve answering a number of more focused ‘minor’ questions, including:

1. What has been Japan’s strategy for ODA to Africa so far, and what have been the key influencing factors behind this approach?
2. What have been some of the key success stories in Japan’s assistance to Africa to date, and what have been some of the major barriers to success?
3. Which donors appear to have had greatest success in providing sustainable, effective assistance to Africa, and how has this been achieved?
4. What are the key priorities that are / will be driving the work of other major donors providing ODA to Africa over the next ten years?
5. Avoiding duplication and recognising its distinctive strengths, what areas, issues, populations, programs or methods might be most appropriate for Japan to focus on in providing ODA to Africa over the next ten years?

This element of the research is designed to be *policy-oriented* and *practically focused*, and will target audiences including:

- Japanese Government - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- JICA HQ and JICA Overseas Offices
- Other Bilateral and Multilateral Donors / Government Agencies
- International NGOs
- United Nations Agencies
- Japanese Embassies
- Japanese & Foreign Media
- Japanese & Foreign Academic Institutions
- TICAD V Working Groups and Conference delegates in 2013

It is anticipated that the methodology supporting this element of the project will include desk research, telephone / face-to-face interviews with academics and officials specialising in African development located in-country and around the world, and case studies / success stories from JICA’s African database.

## **PART THREE - Positioning Japan's ODA as a leader in its field**

This part contextualises the research within the United Kingdom to examine how the findings from the previous two research elements can be used to enhance the public recognition and status of Japan's ODA within an increasingly competitive marketplace. The major question it seeks to answer is:

- What is the best way for Japan to enhance its profile and influence in the development field to remain a leader despite the emergence of new players?

Answering this question will involve answering a number of more focused 'minor' questions, including:

1. What are the most common perceptions / misconceptions among development stakeholders in the UK regarding Japan's ODA?
2. How might Japan best quantify / understand the gap between the size of its ODA contribution and its perceived contemporary public recognition worldwide?
3. What have been the implications of this gap in shaping Japan's ability to influence development policy and practice at the highest international levels?
4. How have / do donors similar to Japan maintain public profile and influence relating to their ODA, both domestically and abroad?
5. Using the example of the UK media, what are some of the relationships, resources and models of interaction that might successfully enhance the profile and influence of JICA in this region?

This element of the research is designed to be *policy-oriented* and *practically focused*, and will target audiences including:

- Japanese Government – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- JICA HQ
- JICA Overseas Offices – particularly those in UK, USA and France
- Other Bilateral and Multilateral Donors / Government Agencies
- International NGOs
- United Nations Agencies
- Japanese Embassies
- Foreign Media – particularly those organisations based in the UK

It is anticipated that the methodology supporting this element of the project will include desk research, telephone / face-to-face interviews with UK-based journalists, academics and officials specialising in international development.

## **APPENDIX B: List of interviewees**

Laura Chappell, Associate Director, Institute for Public Policy Research

Fletcher Tembo, Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute

Izumi Ohno, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS)

Penny Jackson, OECD

Masato Hayashikawa, OECD

Elliott Fox, Rait Orr

Gideon Rabinowitz, UK Aid Network

Ms. Sumie Ishii, Director of JOICFP (Japanese Organisation for International Cooperation on Family Planning)

Ray Wilkinson, Media Adviser to JICA

Prof. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Professor, Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE), Hiroshima University

Duncan Bartlett, BBC

Jonathan Hill, journalist

John Demeza and Tim Armstrong, Crown Agents

Jessica Espey, Research and Policy Adviser, Save the Children UK

James Helm, Director, Communications Division, DFID

Kate Critchley, Head of Strategic Communications, DFID

Charlotte Morgan, Head of News, DFID