Editorial Note

THE NEED TO LINK JAPANESE ACADEMIC RESEARCH WITH THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR HEALTH

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To achieve health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Japan has made significant financial contributions. In June 2005, the Japanese government launched the 'Health and Development' Initiative (HDI) (1) to work towards the following specific measures: (a) assistance for strengthening institutional capacity development in the health sector, (b) assistance in areas that reinforce the health sector and cross-cutting actions, and (c) actions towards MDGs that focus on the following three health-related goals: Goal 4 Reducing child mortality; Goal 5 Improving maternal health; Goal 6 Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Under HDI, the proposed financial contribution will be \$5 billion for the period between Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 and 2009. The government has also pledged \$500 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (2), and \$158 million to fight against avian and pandemic influenza at the regional and global levels for the coming years (3).

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has also made technical and other contributions to the health-related MDGs (4). JICA prioritizes human resource development and capacity development with the goal of promoting ownership and sustainability, so that target developing countries can take their own initiatives to develop and improve their health care systems (4). In particular, for the Goals 4 and 5 activities, JICA disbursed approximately \$300 to \$600 million/year for the period between FY 1996 and FY 2003. For the Goal 6, the amount has steadily increased from approximately \$1.2 billion in FY 1996 to almost \$2 billion in FY 2003. Technical cooperation projects take a large share of the funding for all three goals, using 39.0% of the total assistance for the goals 4 and 5, and 28.8% for the goal 6 in FY 2003 (4).

What about academic contributions? In the Igaku-chuo-zasshi (Japan Centra Revuo Medicina) database, which was established in 1903 and currently cites over 300,000 articles annually from approximately 2,400 Japanese biomedical journals, only 3 articles were listed with

'millennium development goals' as a key word by the end of August, 2006. Of the three, two were the abstracts from conference presentations. In Medline, as of 6 August 2006, 135 articles were listed with 'millennium development goals' as a key word, however none of the authors or the institutions was in Japan. Although some MDG-related articles with Japanese co-authors may be included in more extensive manual search results, these simple computer searches of both Japanese and international databases suggest that Japanese research in international health is not well connected with the health-related MDGs.

To improve this situation, *Tropical Medicine and Health* expects more contributors to link scientific research with the MDGs. Moreover, to increase further academic contributions, more contributors should seek funding for research to link field activities in international health with the MDGs. If the current situation continues, the considerable financial and technical contributions made by the Japanese towards health-related MDGs will not be recognized in the history of achieving these goals.

- (1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan. "Health and Development" Initiative (HDI)-Japan's contribution in achieving the health related MDGs. The Government of Japan, 2005. (available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/health_c/forum/0506/hdi.pdf, accessed 13 September, 2006)
- (2) Yamamoto T. Japan's contribution in achieving the health MDGs. *J Int Health* 2005; 20: 63-4.
- (3) Yamamoto T. Proactive plan to help contain pandemic influenza in Asia. *Trop Med Health* 2006; 34: 75-6.
- (4) Japan International Cooperation Agency. Our challenge for a better tomorrow: report on JICA's contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Planning and Coordination Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2005. (available at http://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/policy/mdg/pdf/mdgs_erep01.pdf and http://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/policy/mdg/pdf/mdgs_erep02.pdf, accessed 13 September, 2006)